

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

BENGAL MUTINY

THE STORY OF THE SEPOY REBELLION

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TO
MARY AND SARAH

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BENGAL MUTINY

I

THE BEGINNING

“**T**HEY were taken fighting against us, and so far deserve little mercy—but on full reflection I would not put them all to death. I do not think we should be justified in the eyes of the Almighty in doing so. One hundred and twenty men are a large number to put to death. Our object is to make an example to terrify others. I think this object would be effectively gained by destroying from one-quarter to one-third of them. I would select all those against whom anything can be shown—such as general bad character, turbulence, prominence in disaffection or in fight, disrespectful demeanour to their officers during the few days before the 26th, and the like. If these do not make up the required number, I would then add the oldest soldiers. All these should be shot or blown away from guns, as may be most expedient.”

—Sir John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of the Punjab ; after an abortive sepoy rising at Peshawar, June, 1857—

“ By the bounty of the glorious Almighty, the yellow-faced and narrow-minded people have been shot to Hell.”

—Dundhu Punt, Maharajah of Bithoor : after the first massacre of English men and women at Cawnpore, June, 1857—

The context from which these two pronouncements, Christian and Hindu, have been torn makes one of the darkest chapters in the long history of India.

§

On December 31, 1600, a company was incorporated under royal charter from Queen Elizabeth with the title of “ The Governor and Company of the Merchants of London, trading into the East Indies.” On Sunday, May 10, 1857, as the church bell sounded through the evening at Meerut, a mutiny began which almost drove the English out of India and which wrote a bloody *Finis* to the history of the great East India Company.

Between those two dates lies the story of a curious metamorphosis : the story of an adventurous little trading concern, owner of two

factories at Masulipatam and Pettapoli in the Bay of Bengal, which turned into a vast administrative organisation, with an army of three hundred thousand men, the backing of the Government in London, and what amounted to paramount power over the whole Indian peninsula.

When Clive defeated Suraj-ed-Dowlah at the Battle of Plassey, the Company ceased to be a trading concern. That was in the year 1757 ; from that year onwards her appointments were first approved by the Crown, her white soldiers fought as soldiers of England, her governor-general was tantamount to a viceroy, and the French and Portuguese resigned themselves to little parcels of territory along the sea-coast. From that year onwards her servants made and unmade kings and princes, her collectors discovered the key to almost fabulous treasures, her armies carried war into the far corners of the land.

On the surface, the story of the British East India Company is adventurous and romantic—brilliant with feats of courage and strategy, dignified with the profession of justice and religion, hallowed with honourable blood. It is also more than a little stained with bribery, plunder, and extortion : and the deeper you go beneath the surface, the deeper the stain.

But nobody expects to dig down to the roots of Empire and to find them clean. The point is that in 1856, when Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General of India, cast a scandalised eye upon the Kingdom of Oudh, and found it corrupt in the sight of God and man, the English had a sincere conviction that their right to India was lawful, and that their government was just and wise.

This right and this government was to a large extent upheld by the “sepoy”—the native soldier, who in earlier days had guarded the Company’s factories and warehouses from marauders, and had afterwards worn her uniform and fought her battles all over the peninsula.

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In 1856, the presidency of Bengal included all the British territories in northern India from the mouths of the Ganges and Brahmaputra to the Himalayas and the Punjab. The army of Bengal consisted of one hundred and fifty thousand sepoys, scattered over this vast territory in one hundred military stations. Their administration was divided into seven divisional commands, with headquarters at Barrackpore, Dinapore, Cawnpore, Meerut, Amballa, Lahore,

and Peshawar. In many of the more remote stations there were no Europeans at all except the officers, and everywhere else the European troops were dangerously outnumbered.

Now the Bengal sepoy was largely recruited from the Kingdom of Oudh. That is why, one year after Dalhousie annexed the Kingdom, declaring that the English government would be " guilty in the sight of God and man " if it " sustained by its countenance an administration fraught with suffering to millions " ; one year after Wajid Ali, the king, left his palace in Lucknow for an exile's villa at Calcutta—the whole Bengal army was in open mutiny, and the valley of the Ganges, from Patna to Delhi, was stained with the blood of English men, women, and children.

Apart from the Bengal army, all India had been alarmed by this affair at Oudh. Other states had been taken over during Dalhousie's régime, for the Governor-General had formulated a " doctrine of lapse," according to which, if a native ruler died without natural heirs his State passed into the Company's hands. The Indian could see no difference between the natural and the adopted son. To his mind the " doctrine of lapse " was just a cloak for greed ; and when Oudh was annexed, without even the doctrine to excuse it, it seemed to many that the

cloak had been thrown off, and that there was nothing underneath it but open tyranny.

The Bengal army had been discontented long before the annexation. It differed from the armies of Madras and Bombay, because it was largely recruited from among the Hindus, and—since the second highest Hindu caste is military—its sepoys were men of education and background. Prepossessing in manners and appearance, they had become the spoilt children of India. They had developed an extraordinarily tender religious conscience, and many were the orders which they could not carry out and the duties which they could not perform because they were afraid of losing caste. Their senior officers, whose promotion did not depend upon efficiency but upon years of service, had made a fetish of these caste prejudices ; and year by year discipline had grown more and more lax.

Then those in authority at Calcutta decided to tighten things up. Various privileges were taken away from the sepoy—such as free letter-carrying, special provision rates, and exemption from tolls. Work became heavier, and furlough less frequent ; a religious conscience no longer provided the way out of an unpleasant duty. And the sepoy discovered that he was a man with a grievance.

This grievance was swollen into ugly proportions by all the rumours then passing to and fro through the length and breadth of India.

Canals, railways, the electric telegraph, the abolishing of suttee, infanticide, and ritual murder and all those other things upon which the English prided themselves, as bringing progress and enlightenment to India, were regarded with the gravest suspicion. The English were trying to undermine the old civilisation and with it the old religions—Christianity was to be imposed upon Muhammadan and Hindu alike. The highest Hindu caste—that of the Brahmin priests—set to work to panic the Bengal sepoy into a fanatic anger. An officer distributing evangelical tracts, no uncommon sight—a rumour that sepoys were to be made to serve overseas, and thus lose their caste by crossing salt water—anything and everything was evidence to support this tale of forced conversion.

With the alarm that followed the annexation of Oudh the whole Bengal army stood upon the very brink of mutiny, and it would take very little indeed to send it over.

What actually sent it over was nothing larger than a greased cartridge.

§

An old prophecy was heard again in India—that within one hundred years of Clive's victory at Plassey the power of the East India Company would be overthrown. Plassey was fought in 1757: in 1857 the English authorities did the one thing most calculated to fulfil that prophecy.

They introduced the Minié rifle, which required a new kind of cartridge, a cartridge covered with grease. And nobody had bothered to find out what that grease was really made of. This was an act of criminal stupidity, for it is against the Hindu caste-rule, and equally offensive to Muhammadan principles, to touch or taste the fat of animals.

Early in January, 1857, a worker of the lowest, or Sudra, caste, employed in the magazines at Dum dum, asked a high-caste sepoy for a drink of water and was arrogantly refused.

The Sudra laughed. Why so proud, he asked, when this sepoy and his fellows were using cartridges "whose tops they must tear with their teeth, smeared with the fat of the sacred cow and the foul pig, which would damn their place in heaven for ever, and render them out-caste from their fellow-men."

The story which the horrified sepoy spread

THE BEGINNING

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abroad that day ran like wild-fire from one end of India to the other.

The mischief was done. In vain the sepoys were told that they could grease their own cartridges with their own butter. The fact remained that the cartridges had been served out—and what was that but an attempt to force the whole army into Christianity?

The whole country was in a state of unrest, but especially Bengal, where the cartridges had made their ill-omened appearance. Night-fires were seen at Barrackpore, always a warning of sepoy disaffection. There was the strange instance of the *chupatties*, the little unleavened cakes, which were passed from one town to another, beginning at Cawnpore, and found their way all over India. There was the disaffection of the 19th Bengal Infantry at Berham-pore, when, on February 27, the regiment refused to parade, the sepoys declaring that they would not touch their cartridges. Since there were no European troops to disarm them, their officers marched them into Barrackpore for punishment.

Two days before their arrival there was trouble at Barrackpore. This was the largest military station in the whole northern territory, in the usual condition of having far too few European

troops. It was commanded by General Hearsey, an old and tried Indian officer.

Unfortunately Colonel Wheler, who commanded the 34th Bengal Infantry at Barrackpore, was not as good a man as his general. He was a great distributor of tracts, and was far more interested in the state of his men's souls than in their discipline. A sepoy of his regiment called Mangal Pandy, a name not yet forgotten in India, having got himself beautifully drugged with *bhang*, rushed out on to the parade ground, calling down curses on the English for subverting the faith with their cartridges, and begging his comrades to join him in a mutiny. He shot an English sergeant-major who tried to disarm him of his musket, had the good fortune to unhorse Lieutenant Baugh, who had ridden over from his quarters to see what the shooting was about, and then killed the sergeant where he lay helpless on the ground. All this time the guard had been lounging at their posts, apparently enjoying the whole spectacle.

Colonel Wheler refused to act. He sent a message to the general, saying that it would be unwise to punish Mangal Pandy, because of the danger of a general mutiny. The general called for his horse, and made off for the parade ground.

Mangal Pandy was still there, strutting up and

down. Most of his regiment had gathered to watch him ; his speeches were growing more violent and more seditious ; the situation was rapidly becoming an ugly one. Hearsey took it in at one glance and drew his sabre. "Take care, sir," said one of his staff officers. "His musket is loaded." "Damn his musket," said the general, and rode towards him. For a moment it seemed as if the sepoy intended to face things out ; but it must have become clear, even to his drug-crazed brain, that his little hour was over. He turned away and shot himself, but not fatally. He lived to be hanged for that day's work.

Two days later the 19th was disbanded in Barrackpore, though its punishment went no further for "Clemency" Canning, who had succeeded Dalhousie as Governor-General, did not care for stern measures, and in any case there were not enough European troops to see the punishment carried out. Still in the Company's uniforms, the sepoys scattered over the countryside, spreading disaffection wherever they went.

Bengal had been drained of European soldiers, and day by day reports of refusal to touch the cartridges arrived from Amballa, from Lucknow, from the remoter stations of the presidency.

Lord Canning sent for English soldiers from Burma—the situation, he saw, was rapidly getting out of his control.

Before he could take any downright action there came disastrous news from Meerut and Delhi.

II

THE OUTBREAK AT MEERUT

SATURDAY, the ninth of May, eighteen hundred and fifty-seven. Dawn was breaking over the European cantonment which lay a little to the north of Meerut, and already there was an unusual stir of excitement along the roads which led to the 60th Regiment parade ground. European civilians, in every kind of conveyance, were hurrying along, calling to each other as they passed with all the air of holiday makers : above them the sky was sullen with clouds and the threat of storm.

On the parade ground itself all the military strength of Meerut was gathered into a hollow square, awaiting the arrival of General Hewitt, commander of the post. The men were facing inwards, and they were gazing, the Europeans with indifference, the native soldiers with a dull rage, at eighty-five troopers of the Third Native Cavalry, who were standing in the middle of the square, beside a rough cart piled high with iron fetters.

The silence was oppressive and ominous : even the white civilians, who had arrived in considerable numbers, hardly dared raise their voices. General Hewitt and his staff rode on to the parade ground.

Immediately there came the command to load, and as the carabineers, the artillery, and the rifles obeyed, those eighty-five troopers before them gazed wildly around the square. And then an officer started to read their sentences aloud, and their punishment began.

They had been condemned, some to ten and some to six years' imprisonment, for refusing to accept the Government cartridges : and it was part of their sentence that their uniforms and accoutrements should be stripped from them in public. This was not all. Somebody had thought of a crowning indignity—they were to be put in irons publicly as well.

For a long time they bore it, not stoically, but as men who have lost the power to speak. Hour after hour the voice droned on ; that and the sound of hammering was all there was to hear. Then one of the eighty-five found his voice, and cried out for "Justice ! " ; and at that cry, hoarse and terrified, every native soldier in the ranks tautened.

It was a moment of enormous strain. Nothing

but the fear of instant death kept those sepoys from breaking their ranks and turning upon their officers, and many of these officers were themselves disgusted at what they were forced to countenance. But the voice droned on, and the punishment went on, and at last all eighty-five were securely ironed. As they were led off they shouted like one man, "*Din! Din! Din!*" "*For the Faith!*" It was a cry to be heard many times during the year, and wherever it was heard murder and mutilation followed it.

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Perhaps General Hewitt was too old for the position he then held. When it first became obvious that there was to be trouble over the Government's greased cartridges, he appears to have acted with firmness, if not with justice. A test case was made of ninety troopers of the Third Cavalry, the most disaffected regiment, and only five had accepted the cartridges when offered them ; the rest had declared that their faith forbade them to have anything to do with cow's grease, and were thereupon handed over to a court-martial of native officers. Their punishment, indeed, had been harsh enough.

So far so good. The Meerut sepoys and

troopers had been shown a very severe example of what happened to those who dared break the Government's orders. But that was not all. They had been terrified—they did not know what to expect next : a general disarmament at least, and possibly something worse than that. All through that long punishment parade they had been sullen and tense. . . .

From this point onwards General Hewitt conducted affairs with the most thorough mismanagement. He commanded an important post, with two thousand white soldiers and three thousand sepoys under him, and he had the means of cowing any outbreak into submission. But he allowed those eighty-five prisoners to sit in their prison, with no more than a native guard over them, just as if nobody would dare try to release them ; just as if their imprisonment had put an end to everything ; just as if he, an old and tried officer, were completely unaware of that ugly atmosphere which crept, hour by hour, over the cantonment at Meerut.

§

All Saturday and Sunday life went on as usual in the European quarters, which stretched in haphazard fashion between the cantonment and

the town. English people are notoriously hopeful : “ Nothing can really *happen* ” is their attitude to anything that threatens them : and when it does happen they are profoundly shocked by it, as by something quite unpredictable. They should have known, on Sunday afternoon, that the sepoys were not sunk in their usual torpor, but were moving restlessly about their lines : but the fans moved regularly in their houses, and they slept their afternoon sleep—the sleep of the just, who have nothing to fear. Towards seven o’clock they gathered for evening service.

Nobody knows quite how it began. Perhaps the mustering of one thousand English troops for church parade started a rumour that all native soldiers were to be disarmed, and the sepoys, hurrying from the town towards their lines, started a riot as they went. There seems to have been no plan in what they did—they acted out of terror. But no European got to church that evening. Those who lived in the cantonment, as they made their way to the church, saw a column of smoke rising from the direction of the town, and heard a confused shouting. Then natives appeared, running for their lives, to tell them that rioting had broken out against the English ; while others, less well

disposed, gathered about their carriages and began to insult them, though as yet without much show of violence. And they turned, and made the best of their way to the safety of the European lines. But there were some who lived nearer to the town, and these found themselves without warning in the very midst of the riot, and not all of them escaped before it turned to massacre.

Meanwhile, most of the sepoy had fallen in on their parade ground, under their white officers. They were obviously mutinous, but there was still some chance that their loyalty would survive the strain it had been put to. Colonel Finnis of the 11th Native Regiment rode over from his quarters and began to harangue them. He expected help from the Rifles and the Artillery —help which never arrived, for General Hewitt was quite unable to cope with the situation—and thought he could hold them for a while, and even pacify them. He might perhaps have succeeded, for he was popular with his men, if a native had not rushed into the parade ground, yelling “Rifles and Artillery are coming to disarm the Native regiments !”

Almost immediately there was a rifle shot. A sepoy of the 20th Regiment had put a bullet through Colonel Finnis’s back, and as he fell

others rushed towards him and fired a volley into his body. The other white officers, powerless to prevent this murder or its consequences, were roughly pushed aside and allowed to leave the ground. The sepoys, excited beyond any hope of control, rushed out towards the town.

Some released their comrades from the prison, and the sight of these men in chains increased the general fury : some set to burning and pillaging all the buildings they could get at—bungalows, mess-houses, anything that came their way. And every European they found was murdered out of hand.

Night was coming on, and the heavy sultry air was red with flames and burdened with smoke. The shouts of the mutineers and the screams of their victims were mingled with the sound of rifle fire and the shrieks of the multitude which had come out of Meerut to join in the pillaging. But there was no movement from the European lines, where two thousand men were drawn up, waiting for the command which should send them down to save the lives of their countrymen.

Meerut began the Indian Mutiny, and Meerut might have ended it, if Hewitt had been less dilatory. As it was, the mutineers had their way for a few hours, and most of them were on the road to Delhi before the English soldiers came

on the scene. They were not checked, and they were not pursued ; they could have been scattered long before they reached Delhi, and if they had there would have been a different tale to tell.

The story of Meerut is not so ferocious as others that are to follow. The mutineers were never in complete control, for those Europeans who could make their way to the English lines were perfectly assured of their safety ; and even those who were caught in the riot found loyal servants or friendly natives to save them from massacre. The English Government, before Delhi fell into the hands of the rebels, was still the Government, and could punish those who offended against it ; the mutineers were surprised at their success and always fearful of counter-attack ; a few hours were not enough for hunting out all the possible victims ; and other reasons why Meerut was only the prologue to horror.

But sad stories have come out of it—like the story of Mrs. Macdonald, who ran a street's length before they caught her and hacked her to pieces ; or of Mrs. Chambers, on the eve of her confinement, whose clothes were alight before her murderers put an end to her. However the story of the Mutiny is told, it is the English

women who suffered most in it, and showed the greatest heroism ; much of the rest is a story of massacre and reprisal, and in the end it was difficult to tell which side was the more brutal. The story of Meerut, in any case, is brief and not well documented ; and the fate of its victims was no more than a warning of the abominations that were to follow.

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General Hewitt, it seems, was too old ; and Brigadier Wilson could not act over the head of his superior officer. At any rate, when the English troops at last set out for the scene of the massacre they were marched and countermarched until night had long set in and the mutineers had done their worst. When they arrived on the scene they were able to restore order to some extent and set pickets at strategical points through the town. But their countrymen were dead, and their murderers already on the broad road to Delhi. Officers begged for the chance to pursue them, but were allowed to go only a little distance, where they shot at a few stragglers and then retired to their lines. The mutineers went onwards, with their heads constantly turned over their shoulders, looking out for the attack that never came. When morning broke the

country was empty behind them, and they were filled with a confidence they should never have been allowed to feel. They reached the gates of Delhi unharmed : and from that moment onwards the Indian Mutiny was an accomplished fact.

III

DELHI

THE first sight that greeted the traveller as he came in from Meerut to Delhi, crossing the river Jumna by its bridge of boats, would be the rose-red palace of Shah Jehan. Facing west and north along the curve of the Jumna, it went back six hundred yards into the city, and if you walked all the way round its walls you would have a full mile to go. Here Shah Muhammad Abu Zuphur Saraz-o-dain Muhammad Bahadur, last of the Mogul Emperors, still kept the shadow of imperial state upon the throne of his ancestors.

The palace was the strangest mixture of the beautiful and the sordid. Behind the red sand-stone wall which faced the river lay the King's pleasure gardens, and behind these gardens were the palace baths and mosque. Next to them there rose the white marble terraces of one of the most famous buildings in India—the Dewan-i-Khas, or Hall of Private Audience. All of white marble, beautifully ornamented, and

colonnaded with tall pillars, it bore an inscription which read : " If there be a Paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this."

A paradise set in the most curious surroundings. Stretching away on either side of it to the brick walls that guarded the palace from the city of Delhi, lay a veritable maze of buildings. Some were of masonry, some of mats, some of mud. The larger houses had underground chambers, which, by a series of secret doors and passages, connected house with house : they had dark enclosed courtyards, winding corridors, mysterious little nooks and crannies : they seemed to have been built on no plan, except the plan of hiding whatever went on there.

They were incredibly filthy inside and out. Beautifully jewelled cabinets stood dimmed and lustreless ; rich carpets were stained and torn and heavy with the accumulated dust of years ; ivory and silver chairs were covered with filthy bits of rag. The whole place smelt of a life that had ceased to resist its own decay.

It was like something out of the Italian Renaissance, that life, only dulled with a stupid inertia. Here lived hundreds of people, royalties, and half royalties, and connections to the most intricate and remote degrees of relationship. They had nothing to do and nothing to look forward

to ; they had given themselves up, the young to lust, the old to intrigue. Every device known to the East for inflaming passion or satisfying cruelty was sooner or later employed there : incest, murder, poison, torture, were matters of daily occurrence.

There in the shadow of the King's name flourished "men and women skilled in the preparation of poisons, of drugs to cause unconsciousness and facilitate robbery and incest. . . . Wrestlers, jesters, dancing girls who danced naked to inflame the passions of old age, musicians, forgers, swindlers, thieves, receivers of stolen property, distillers of spirits, compounders of sweetmeats and opium." The palace was a refuge for criminals of every sort.

And it was a breeding ground of intrigue—family intrigue, where wife plotted against wife, and mother against son, so that the river which flowed under the walls carried many a victim away in the darkness of night. And political intrigue, directed more and more against British rule in India.

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When Lord Lake captured the city of Delhi in 1803 he found the Mogul Emperor—Shah Alam, King of Delhi—practically a prisoner,

blind, aged, helpless, cowering in the dirt of the little chamber where his Mahratta conquerors had confined him. He had nothing left him but the title of King. The English set him up again, made him absolute within his own grounds and the city, and retained only the administration of his revenues from the territories which they assigned him.

It was an old English policy—the policy of the middle way ; and it did not work. The more the English deferred to the King, the more he demanded of them. He lavished his money on favourites, and scattered it in a thousand useless directions. His palace became the gathering place for half the worthless and desperate men in Hindustan. Yet the English Resident was required by Company's orders to pay homage to the old man, as if he were really an Emperor and not an expensive and dangerous puppet.

His death in 1806 made matters no better, for his successor, Shah Akbar II, was even more demanding. The Company increased his allowance, whereupon he asked for more ; the Company's Resident was even more delicate and more deferent in his behaviour towards him, whereupon he claimed precedence of the Governor-General himself. And there was nothing to be

done. If he were deposed, his deposition would alarm every prince in India ; if he were retained, he was in control of a city which could be turned into one of the most impregnable fortresses in India. Akbar died with the palace still in his possession, and the English still in a terrible dilemma.

His successor, Shah Bahadur, King of Delhi at the time of the Meerut outbreak, was very much of a family man. White-bearded and venerable, he spent much of his time in writing couplets over the walls of his chamber ; for the rest, he lent an easy ear to the demands of his family and to the "dalals," the shyster lawyers who gathered about every royal court or wealthy family house in India to get what pickings they could. And his family's greed for money knew no limits. With the aid of the "dalals" they concocted claims that had to be resisted ; without anybody's aid they piled up debts that had to be settled. The English came to the end of their patience.

The King, so long as he held that title, could not be removed from Delhi ; but he could be removed from his own palace. The matter was put up to him as tactfully as possible, and he very naturally refused. The English bided their time. When the heir-apparent died in 1849

they made it quite clear that the next heir was to be the last King. Thereafter a lesser title would be used and the family would leave Delhi.

When the news of this proposal got abroad in India, the effect was to arouse a great deal of bad feeling and a great deal of very genuine alarm. No former conqueror of Delhi had ever removed the King's person. Not even Timour, in 1398, who pillaged the city for five days and left a pyramid of human skulls to mark his departure. He left Nazir-u-din on the throne. Nadir Shah, who captured the city in 1739, and massacred one hundred thousand of its inhabitants, allowed Muhammad Shah to stay. And now the British, who hitherto had been merciful and generous conquerors, would dethrone the King and leave imperial Delhi without a monarch. Small wonder that intrigue against the Company's rule centred in the palace. What was the company after all but a handful of interlopers, who had held a vast continent by a reputation for invincibility, a reputation which, in these days, would not stand a close scrutiny?

Foremost among the plotters was the King's favourite wife, a young and vigorous woman, who wanted the succession for her son. Only once in the story of the mutiny did she break

the convention that forced a woman to keep silence before strangers ; but she knew of every whisper in every corridor and courtyard in the vast palace ; and daily she hoped and prayed and plotted for the Company's downfall.

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And so, as the morning of May 11 broke, the sepoys from Meerut came within sight of Delhi.

It was a city over seven miles in circumference, with a stone and brick wall on three sides, and the palace fortress and the gardens of the " River Suburb " facing the river on the fourth.

It had been laid out and constructed by Shah Jehan in 1631-2 ; he had built it with a keen eye to its sovereign position in Hindustan. Around it there spread the evidences of former cities—tombs and ruins and overgrown pleasure gardens, ancestral places which no pious Hindu would dare restore, dotted about in the ravines and the broken country. To the north and west lay the houses of nobles and the pleasure gardens of Shalimer. Further out was the Ridge, a raised expanse where the British cantonments were situated, with the Flagstaff Tower dominating them ; here Brigadier Graves and his native regiments kept watch over the city.

If you went from the cantonments down into Delhi you would enter by the Kashmir Gate, largest of the seven arched and decorated gateways. Around it, and just within the city, lay the church, the executive offices, and some of the leading European houses. Then came the arsenal ; then the Calcutta Gate, against the northward wall of the palace, the gate which opened to the road from Meerut. Passing southward along the city side of the palace, you would come to the main palace entrance—it was called the Lahore Gate, and from it, striking westward through the city, was the Chandni Chauk, or “street of silver.” Here was the great *bazaar* of Delhi, cutting the city almost in half from east to west, and harbouring some of the richest shops and some of the worst characters in Hindustan.

Still further southward lay the “River Suburb,” a European quarter, which fronted on the River Jumna, and stretched from the south end of the palace to the southward walls of the city. The Europeans who lived here were completely cut off from the Kashmir Gate and the road to the cantonments, for a whole city lay between. Moreover, the traveller from Meerut, if he found the Calcutta Gate closed against him, could go southward under the palace walls along the river.

bank until he came to the Raj-ghat, a gate which led directly into the European quarters.

Through that gate, into those quiet streets and gardens, came the mutineers from Meerut, on Monday, May 11, 1857.

IV

MUTINY IN DELHI

OME thirty or forty troopers of the Third Native Cavalry rode into Delhi ahead of the main body of mutineers. They clattered across the Jumna by its bridge of boats and knocked upon the two great doors of the Calcutta Gate. Behind them, a bungalow they had fired on the far side of the river burned fiercely in the bright morning light.

The gate stayed shut against them, its native guard being still uncertain what to do ; so they turned and rode southward beneath the palace wall, until they came to a little balcony, built high above their heads, from which the Mogul emperors had for generations shown their faces to the people. Here they reined in their horses, and called loudly for the King.

At first there was no answer ; then, in one of their intervals of silence, a shrill voice threw them some phrases of encouragement from one of the neighbouring turrets. It was the young queen, breaking the age-old law of silence before

strangers ; it was Delhi's first answer to the call of Mutiny. . . .

Captain Douglas, the English officer in command of the fortress-palace, was still in his quarters above the Lahore Gate, when the King's messenger came to him. Some troopers have come in from Meerut, he was told, and are calling out beneath the palace walls : you must go to the King, for he will not show himself to them without you. Douglas could have found no meaning in that. Some few deserters, perhaps, had come to ask for the King's protection. But he knew that the old man was troubled and confused by any claim on him that did not come within the ordinary routine ; and he hurried across the courtyards into the great Hall of Public Audience, where the King was waiting him. With the old man leaning on his arm, they went out together on to the balcony.

Douglas scarcely heard the clamour that greeted their appearance ; he scarcely glanced at the men below him ; he stared across the river in blank amazement. There was a bungalow in flames, and, together with every other British official in India, he knew what fire meant. So these were not just forty deserters, who could be rounded up and sent back to their punishment : there was something more ominous to be reckoned

for, some larger disaffection. He gazed down again at the faces below him—there was too much assurance and contempt in them. And then one of the mutineers took up the tale of the last evening's massacre : one by one his companions joined in, offering the King their allegiance, with many oaths and petitions. And that is how the story of Meerut was first heard in Delhi.

§

Douglas, of course, still felt himself master of the situation. He believed the tale of massacre, he knew that the main body of sepoys would soon be under the walls of Delhi ; but Hewitt's troops, he was sure, would be hard on their heels, and if the native soldiers in the city remained loyal (and he had no reason to imagine they would not) the mutineers would be caught between two fires and quickly disposed of. So long as he could temporize the situation was serious but not desperate. Choking down his horror and disgust, he began to speak to the men, telling them that the King had no desire to hear them or their petitions, but that, if they would send two or three into the palace as a deputation, he himself would deal with them.

For a man who had been stunned with unexpected and horrifying news, he did well : but he did not know what his hearers knew—that Hewitt's English troops were likely to stay in Meerut, that the telegraph wires had been cut between the two stations, that half the sepoys in Delhi were ripe for insurrection. While he was still speaking, with the old King's hand trembling on his arm, they turned their horses and galloped off towards the Raj-ghat Gate and the "River Suburb." Still hoping that they would not dare enter the city, Douglas hurried away to make his preparations for receiving the main body when it should come.

But those few mutineers were more determined than he had supposed. The Raj-ghat Gate opened to them and they galloped through ; before them lay the European quarter, quiet under the morning sun, and going peacefully about its morning work ; it had not the slightest warning of what was to follow. Suddenly there was a sound of galloping from the river, and native cavalrymen burst into the streets, with drawn sabres and murder in their eyes. No European who was in their path that morning had any time for escape ; he was ridden down and killed. The mutineers swept through, making northwards for the Calcutta Gate, and

behind them came a rabble which had gathered out of the Chandni Chauk Bazaar, thieves and cut-throats who had crept out of their hiding-places at the very rumour of plunder, and were already beginning a murderous hunt through the villas and gardens and the more remote streets.

Douglas, meanwhile, had been joined by Commissioner Fraser and Collector Hutchinson, brought out of their houses by wild stories of what was happening up in the palace. Unaware as yet that rioting had already broken out in the European quarter, the three men hurriedly decided upon what steps they should take to secure the city against the main body of mutineers, who might appear at any moment. The vital point in any attack from Meerut would be the Calcutta Gate, so Douglas and Hutchinson went off to assure themselves that it was properly guarded. Fraser sent off a messenger to Brigadier Graves up on the Ridge, and then drove into the city to spread the warning among all police posts. He was never seen again.

When Douglas and Hutchinson appeared the Calcutta Gate was still shut, and the men of the 38th Native Infantry who guarded it were standing to their arms. They came to a slovenly salute, but there was an air about them of scarcely

concealed hostility. They had heard the rumours too.

And so begins the first of the recorded Delhi murders. The guard standing in the gate, tense and sullen ; the two Englishmen facing them, uncertain how to act. And then, what ? Perhaps, as they faced one another, suspense that became unbearable ; perhaps a distant wail from the European quarter, or the sound of hoofbeats drawing ominously nearer. . . . Suddenly the line of sepoys wavered ; two musket-shots echoed and re-echoed under the gateway arch. Douglas and Hutchinson began to crawl back into the shelter of the palace.

Douglas had been hit in the foot and Hutchinson was more severely wounded. They were allowed to get away, and some bystanders—who afterwards gave the evidence for this story—helped them back into Douglas's quarters, above the Lahore Gate of the palace. As they were carried off they could hear the sound of the Gate being opened. It stayed open all that day, and when it was shut again, it was shut by order from the King of Delhi.

A few minutes later some few cavalrymen of the mutineering 3rd galloped up from the European quarter, their sabres already stained to the hilt with blood.

Death was not far away from Douglas and Hutchinson. They were carried up the stairs of Douglas's house, and there they found what they would have given much not to find. Mr. Jennings, the Anglican chaplain who lodged in the same building, was waiting for them with his daughter and a young friend of hers, a Miss Clifford : he had been too confused to try and get his party into safety.

There was a room at the head of the stairs into which they all crowded, and a message was sent to the King begging protection for the chaplain's ladies. It was sent too late.

Already a crowd of mutineers and *badmashes* ("toughs") had begun to gather at the foot of the stairway ; and while Hutchinson stumbled to his feet and went out to harangue them, Jennings pushed the two girls into a large wardrobe at the back of the room.

The crowd did not hear Hutchinson out. They rushed up the stairs, overwhelmed him where he stood, and killed the clergyman as he tried to oppose them in the doorway. Douglas, in terrible pain from his injured foot, put up what resistance he could ; he was cut to pieces. And then the wardrobe was wrenched open, and there was a horrid hacking and slashing.

British authority in the palace was at an end.

§

The capture of the palace—if the massacre of those five victims can be dignified with the word “capture”—was symbolic. Whatever might happen afterwards, British sovereignty had been driven from the most royal palace in India ; and for those who had done that deed, who had spilt blood there, there could be no turning back. From now onward the Company's sepoy must beat the Company or be crushed himself.

Already the first of the main body of mutineers were coming in through the Calcutta Gate, and, meeting with no resistance, were spreading out through the city. Some made their way to the King's presence, some went in search of plunder, some joined the 3rd Cavalry troopers, fresh from their murder above the palace gate.

And now the scene of the drama changes—of the drama, that is, which is known to us, for those who were slaughtered all day long in the “River Suburb” have never found a chronicler. There was still one little piece of Delhi which the English were likely to hold to the end—the Kashmir Gate, guarding the road between Delhi and the military cantonments. Because of what happened there on this day and on a certain day

three months later, it has become a famous name in the history of the British in India.

Within it there was a semicircular compound, called the Main Guard, with a guard-house below and officers' quarters above ; the side of this compound which faced the city was fenced in with a white paling ; and beyond this paling were the church, the executive offices, and a number of European houses. On this Monday, May 11, the Kashmir Gate was guarded by another detachment of the 38th—a corps, be it said, which already had “a tradition of successful disobedience.” A few rumours, a few distant shouts from the southward end of the city, a sound of shooting from the palace, had made them restless, and angry, and ripe for mutiny.

In his cantonments on the Ridge the news had reached Brigadier Graves, and on his shoulders now fell the whole responsibility. So quickly had one event followed another that he probably knew very little of the true state of affairs. But for weeks he, like everyone else, had been expecting trouble of some kind, and he acted at once : though his first action suggests that he had underestimated the gravity of what was happening down in the city. Under his command, besides the unreliable 38th, were the 54th Native Infantry, a fairly sound regiment,

and the 74th Native Infantry, which had an unrivalled reputation for good service. There was also a field battery, with native gunners and drivers, under the command of Captain de Tessier.

At this stage in the drama there was just a chance that one demonstration of sepoy loyalty might have changed the whole course of events. It would not, perhaps, have saved Delhi for the English—things had gone too far for that—but it might have brought them away from the scene with some rags of dignity. It was still early enough for the less disaffected element among the native regiments to stand by its officers ; it was still early enough for the Kashmir Gate and the cantonments to have been secured at least until evening.

But Graves did not send down his trusted 74th. Instead, he ordered Colonel Ripley to parade the 54th—less two companies, who were to follow the Colonel with two of de Tessier's guns. In this move, of course, he was the less to blame because he did not know—and could not have known—that Hewitt's troops from Meerut would not arrive during the whole of that tragic day.

So Ripley was sent down to keep order at the Palace, whence all hope of order had already departed. His men seemed cheerful enough as

they swung through the pleasure gardens and into the shade of the Kashmir Gate.

At the Gate all was well. The 38th presented arms to Ripley as he went through. Ahead of him the road lay empty in the sun. He had advanced but a few hundred paces along it when they came.

They were an ugly and strangely assorted rabble. At their head were some troopers of the 3rd Cavalry and a few of the main body of mutineers, just arrived in the city ; behind them crowded whatever the bazaar had spewed out to grace the King's triumph over his British conquerors.Flushed as they were with victory and hot for blood, the sudden appearance of Ripley and the ordered ranks behind him brought them to a momentary halt, and the two bodies faced each other in silence. Then came Ripley's sharp command to load.

Nobody knows quite what happened afterwards. It is said that the 54th refused to load ; and that the mutineering troopers took heart at this and rode straight at the little group of British officers standing in front of them. Four were killed immediately, while Ripley himself was cut down and—so he said before he died—bayoneted by his own men as he lay on the ground.

The 54th were not yet ready for the whole act of mutiny ; they opened their lines and let the officers drag Ripley and the four corpses back into the shelter of the Kashmir Gate. And then, just in time, de Tessier's two guns came rattling through the Gate, and at the sight of them the mutineers withdrew into the city. With them went most of the 54th.

Ripley—"slashed to pieces"—was carried up into the cantonments to die. The four dead officers were put into a cart and taken outside the gate by native carriers. (A month later their remains were found, still in the same cart, where they had been abandoned in a rutted lane some half-mile from the city ; the sun and the carrion birds had had their way with them then, and they were bare skeletons.) De Tessier's two guns and their complement, the surviving officers of the 54th, and a sullen native guard and their officers were left in uneasy control of the Kashmir Gate.

§

The day was slowly wearing away—a day of utmost confusion and despair for those who had gathered in the few points of temporary shelter : a day of horror unspeakable for those who were

trapped in the "River Suburb." Many Europeans who lived around the Kashmir Gate had found their way to the officers' quarters above the Main Guard ; others had gone to the Flagstaff Tower, on the Ridge above the city, which Graves had made a rallying place for refugees. From there they watched the city in dull amazement, or gazed along the empty road to Meerut, waiting for those troops who delayed so unaccountably long.

But from those bloody fragments which one can piece into the story of the mutiny in Delhi one act of gallantry stands apart—and it is still recited as one of the most glorious feats in the annals of British soldiering.

There were two arsenals under Graves's care. The larger was situated outside Delhi, and had been left—stupidly enough—to the care of a native guard, who very naturally refused to surrender it. The smaller of the two lay well within the city, not many hundred yards from the palace walls. It was guarded by nine Englishmen—Lieutenants Willoughby, Forrest, and Raynor, with six warrant officers and sergeants—and an unspecified number of sepoys. It was the last British stronghold in Delhi, and those who held it were determined that it should not fall into the hands of the mutineers. As soon as

the attack became too much for him and his eight companions, Willoughby had arranged to blow up the arsenal ; and to that end a fuse was laid to the main magazine, and Warrant Officer Scully stood by, ready to touch it off at a given signal.

The situation in which these nine found themselves was desperate from the very outset. The sepoy's under their command had begun to desert at the first hint of danger. All around them the city had been given over to riot. With the murder of Ripley and the dispersal of the 54th their last hope of relief, a faint hope at best, had disappeared. They were completely cut off.

They had dragged the ten guns at their disposal into such positions that the main entrance to the arsenal would be subjected to a withering fire just as soon as the mutineers broke in ; then they waited for the enemy to make the first move.

It came in the form of an insolent message in the King's name—a demand for surrender which Willoughby took some pleasure in answering a little more insolently.

After that they had little longer to wait. At first the sepoy's who came against them—and the most conservative accounts put them down at several hundred—contented themselves with

breaking down the main gate and trying to attack the defenders from the front. But Willoughby's guns had been well placed, and the mutineers could make no head against their fire. So they called for scaling ladders, and began to swarm up the walls. Willoughby's position was now untenable. He and his little band were driven back foot by foot against the magazines ; though they had escaped thus far—by some sort of miracle—with only two men severely wounded they must inevitably be overwhelmed within a very few minutes.

From where he stood Willoughby could see over the battlements towards Meerut. He peered through the smoke for some sign of British troops along the road—(and surely of all the victims of Hewitt's negligence he is the most condemning) ; then he looked across at Scully, standing by his fuse, and gave the sign. . . .

There was a dull roar, and a red, heavy pillar of smoke climbed slowly into the air and spread out like a mushroom over Delhi. Pieces of masonry, and twisted metal, heads and limbs and fragments of torn flesh descended from it in a slow and filthy rain : those who watched from the Flagstaff Tower knew that their last hope had gone, and turned dully to the problems and chances of escape. A few minutes later

Willoughby, blackened with smoke, staggered into the Main Guard of the Kashmir Gate. He and two others had miraculously escaped, when three hundred mutineers had been blown to pieces or crushed beneath the wreckage.

§

Torn between his duty to the refugees under his care, and his desire to make one personal attempt at saving Delhi for the Company, Graves decided to stay where he was. He ordered Major Abbott to take the trusted 74th down to the Kashmir Gate, the one regiment which, hopeless though the proposition sounded, might yet force or shame the mutineers into order. And the 74th was willing to go : muskets were loaded, and the men marched down singing.

But within the Main Guard an atmosphere of hatred and suspicion hung like a cloud ; the sepoys of the 74th struggled against it in vain. Before the lounging guard of the 38th, and its troubled English officers, they began visibly to lose their air of confidence and alertness. No words passed between them and the guard, but they seemed to know that some new treachery was in the air, and suddenly they began to beg Major Abbott to take them out. From the

officers' quarters above, some English ladies, who had escaped massacre earlier in the day, but had not dared a journey to the Flagstaff Tower, watched the scene in terrible suspense.

Abbott was a brave man : he was also a lucky one. Of his own accord he would never have given in to his men's demands. But Graves seems to have realised what little use one regiment could be so late in the day, particularly a regiment of sepoys, however loyal. They might better be employed in covering the retreat of his refugees, and in bringing the two guns back from the Gate with them. So he sent a message down to Abbott, telling him to withdraw his men.

The major called the 74th to attention. Goaded almost beyond endurance, they begged him to get them out of the Main Guard, away from the Gate, and not to bother about discipline. "Don't wait to get into line," one of them cried out above the rest. "Go on, go on, sir." Abbott did not know what was in their minds, or what fear was riding them, but he saw that they were almost at the breaking point, and let them have their way. They straggled out behind the two guns ; the Gate was crashed to behind them ; and immediately afterwards there came a sharp burst of firing.

"What is that?" Abbott asked. They told him: "Sir, it is the men of the 38th firing on their officers." He begged for a hundred volunteers to go back with him—for fifty—for twenty; but his sepoys refused, saying that it was too late now, that it was all over. "Save yourself," they told him. "You can do nothing."

Abbott had to think quickly; he realised that if he stayed his own men would sooner or later turn on him, too. And he made off towards the Ridge with a heavy heart.

The 38th guard had restrained themselves for the whole day. They had seen the murder of Ripley, their ears had been deafened with the exploding of the Arsenal, they had watched English ladies and gentlemen flying past them into safety; the city was being looted by their comrades, their officers were uneasy, and they had never been very loyal at best. Because the Kashmir Gate had not been attacked all day, and because they did not so greatly outnumber the Englishmen who still lingered there with de Tessier's guns, the guard had not openly rebelled. They were waiting their time, their sullen mood turning slowly into hatred; and with that hatred came a sense of power. They had their officers where they could not escape; and at the right moment they intended to kill them—the right

moment being that curious sensation that came over even the most "loyal" sepoys in the mutiny, a sensation of being unable to stop themselves from murder.

When the 74th had disappeared with the two guns, and the Gate had shut behind them, the guard turned upon their officers. Captain Smith of the 24th N. I. fell mortally wounded ; Captain Gordon of the 74th, who had not got out before the gate shut, was killed instantly. There is no record of officers of the 38th who fell ; one may suppose that the guard's marksmanship was poor, for according to the somewhat incoherent accounts of the survivors, most of them managed to escape by way of the ramp up into an embrasure of the bastion.

Here they were faced with a thirty-two foot jump into the ditch below, and were just about to attempt it when they heard screams and prayers from the officers' quarters, and remembered—(as in the confusion of the moment they had forgotten)—that there were ladies still to be saved.

They turned back and helped these poor creatures towards the wall, making a rope of their handkerchiefs to let them down into the ditch. The guard, still engaged in killing off the wounded below, could spare only a few

scattered shots for those who were escaping above. But even after these had made the difficult descent without mishap, and were still clambering out of the ditch—no easy task with a number of terrified women who were not used to exertion—they were not molested. Surprised and thankful at receiving so much mercy, they made off in the direction of Meerut—till at length, weary and footsore, with shreds of clothes on our backs, we arrived at a village where they put us in a hut, and fed us for four days, and moreover took a note for us into Meerut, whence an escort of cavalry was sent out, and we were brought safely in here."

Up on the Ridge the Brigadier had already ordered all those who were there to make off as best they could. Some had carriages and horses ; some *should* have had them, if their coachmen had not stolen them away. There was a scene of great confusion, made no easier by the presence of groups of sepoys who were strolling aimlessly about, and staring "insolently" at the ladies. These happened to be men of the better sort, who had done no more than disobey their officers, and not a few offered the refugees their help and escorted them a little way along the road. Soon there was nobody left but Graves and some of his officers.

Night was coming on, and very soon the rabble would arrive from Delhi to plunder and burn the cantonments. Graves made one last attempt to rally his troops. He had the "Assembly" sounded on the parade ground : and it is said that one sepoy fell in.

Then he told his officers to make their escape, and when there was no Englishman left on the Ridge he rode off all alone towards Meerut.

Every one of those refugees arrived safely either in Karnal or Amballa or Meerut. True, many of them came in half naked, having been stripped by robbers on the road, and terribly blistered with the sun and half dead with fatigue ; yet almost all had the same tale to tell—"We found the people very kind." For the mutiny was not a national rising by any manner of means ; it was a purely military affair, and those civilians who threw in their lot with it were either fanatics or *badmashes* or nobles who had some grudge against England or who thought the end of English rule had come. If it had been left unchecked, of course it would have become a religious war and, sooner or later, most of the peoples of India would have been involved in it. But at the time of the Delhi massacre the English had little to fear from Indian

peasants such as they would meet in their flight from Delhi.

Bands of sepoys came out after them, and there were robbers to escape, and occasionally a whole village would prove hostile. But for the most part they were treated with pity and compassion—they were taken in and fed and rested, for so long as it was safe to keep them. The local potentates, also, were for the most part friendly. The refugees on their side showed extraordinary courage and endurance ; many of the ladies had children with them, and even wounded officers to support—“although we had been from Delhi some five days,” one of them wrote, “yet we were not more than about ten miles on our journey” ; there was the terrific heat by day, and sometimes no more than the hard ground at night ; there was the constant fear of attack ; and few of them arrived with more than a rag or two to cover them. And those were the days when modesty and weakness were considered virtues in the female.

§

That is how Delhi was lost to the English. Blame has been laid upon Hewitt, wisely ; and upon Graves, unwisely : but the real blame lies

with the Government which could allow a great city—and a certain rallying place for riot and disaffection—to be left with no more than a handful of English troops. When night fell in Delhi on Monday, May 11, there was English blood in its streets which cried out, not only for vengeance upon the murderers, but against those who had been so blind as to let murder take place.

V

THE DEVIL'S WIND

FROM May 12 to the month's end there was no further mutiny ; but the whole Presidency from Calcutta in the east to Peshawar in the west was filled with the mutter of a gathering storm. In a hundred scattered and lonely stations the English waited, not daring to disarm their sepoys and unwilling to run away. So long as their regiments retained any semblance of fidelity, both duty and interest forbade them to escape. They were neatly trapped.

Perhaps the greatest man in India then was Sir John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of the Punjab. His province lay up in the northwest, its furthest boundaries beneath the Afghan mountains ; a wild country, wildly inhabited, and only seven years under English rule. Violent and prejudiced at times, Sir John was none the less a great administrator and a great personality : while his understanding of the Indian mind was only equalled by that of his gentler brother, Sir

Henry Lawrence, then Chief Commissioner of Oudh.

With thirty-eight thousand mutinous Hindu sepoys against twelve thousand Punjabi Sikhs and a scattering of European soldiers, Sir John had his own troubles. But he kept the peace, disarming where he could, intimidating where he could not ; his sepoys disappeared into their own homes, or marched off to join the real mutiny further east ; and Sir John concentrated upon the problem of saving the Presidency of Bengal, and with it the whole of India.

When the news of Delhi first came to him, he sent a telegram to General Anson, Commander-in-Chief of the Bengal Army. It was a typical message—" Clubs not spades are trumps " : the only hope for England was attack and not defence. And the first place to attack was Delhi, a logical rallying-point for mutiny, as Lawrence insisted in further messages, echoed by every important station in the Presidency.

Anson went thundering down from Simla into the stifling plains below, and gathered the skeleton of an army at Amballa : it was to fight its way to Delhi and there, so everybody hoped and many believed, batter the city into submission. But as the month drew to a close, and Delhi grew stronger rather than weaker, while the little



besieging army clung desperately to two miles of rocky hill, Lawrence saw the mutiny in clearer perspective.

In time he could send reinforcements to Delhi from the Punjab—commanded by his lieutenants, who were the pick of India, and backed by his advice, which was worth more than gold. From the east, Lord Canning could get English troops from Persia, Burma, and China to land at Calcutta and force their way inward ; there would be no difficulty about that, so long as the six hundred miles of road between Calcutta and Cawnpore were kept open. Eventually a ring of steel would be drawn around the infected area.

Eventually. But these things took time. What was to happen in the meanwhile to those of his countrymen who were caught in the centre—in Oudh and Rohilkhand, the provinces east and north-east of Delhi, in Bundelkhand and Gwalior to the south, in the "North-West Provinces" where Delhi and Meerut had already fallen, and where Agra was filled with civilians ?

Perhaps his puritan nature did not allow him very much space for pity. Perhaps he muttered a "God help the poor women and children"—words that were heard too often in that wild year of mutiny. But there the real tragedy lay :

"The Devil's Wind"—as the natives called this mutiny—was to blow most fiercely against the women and children, and help would come too late. True, in Calcutta itself a regiment of Madras Fusiliers had landed under the command of Colonel Neill, and small details of English troops were already moving westward : but these, with Barnard's march on Delhi, were the only signs of real activity. All through the centre of the Presidency the English waited helplessly for The Devil's Wind.

On May 30 it began to blow.

To chart its course through all the lesser stations would be a tedious and melancholy business. Often the country people were compassionate and the native princes well disposed : sometimes, too, the sepoys behaved gently towards their officers, so that many English families got off in safety. But if one were to try and gather all these minor uprisings and massacres into one typical story, that might well be the story of Jhansi. It is brief, simple, and tragic. In the causes which contributed to it, and the curious perfidy which marked it, Jhansi's massacre could speak for the whole mutiny.

Jhansi was a small semi-independent native state in the province of Bundelkhand—that is south of Delhi and towards the centre of India.

Its last rajah had died in 1853, leaving an adopted son whom the English—producing their famous “doctrine of lapse” like an ace out of the sleeve—absolutely refused to recognise. They de-throned the Rani with a pension of £6000 a year and the privilege of paying her husband's debts, thereby making themselves a peculiarly bitter enemy. She was a young, handsome, energetic Mahratta princess ; she was both ruthless and ambitious, and she merely waited her day.

It came sooner than she had hoped. The episode of the greased cartridges was a godsend to her, and she set to work upon the native garrison of the town, sending religious mendicants among them with wonderful tales of forced conversion. As for the townspeople themselves, the public spectacle of cows being slaughtered for the purposes of food had not endeared the English to them. On the whole, Jhansi was one of the most dangerous spots in the whole Presidency.

There were no English troops in the garrison, which was composed of a detachment of native foot artillery, the left wing of the 12th Native Infantry, and the right wing of the 14th Irregular Cavalry. Captain Dunlop of the 12th was commandant and Major Skene political officer.

The town itself was in a proper setting for tragedy. To the east and west of it lay high belts of basalt hills, and over the barren plain upon which it lay were scattered a number of sad tamarind groves and two or three large and grim temples. Above its walls stood a high granite rock, with a little fortress perched on top. Southward of the town lay the English bungalows, a gaol, a building called the Star Fort which housed the military treasure chest, and the lines of the sepoys themselves.

On the afternoon of Monday, June 1, a company of the 12th revolted. Their first movement was to occupy the Star Fort, whose guard yielded to them without a blow, and to make a proclamation from it, offering to remunerate each man for his services at 12 rupees a day. Captain Dunlop immediately paraded the rest of the infantry and cavalry, who swore that they would stand by him to a man.

That night nothing occurred, though Dunlop took the precaution of sending all English civilians into the town fort, with as many officers as he could spare to look after them. The next morning he paraded his men again ; and again they swore, with many oaths and protestations, that they were loyal to him and to the Company. When he asked them if they would come with

him to attack the Star Fort, and help him punish their mutinous comrades, they shouted that they would.

Dunlop wanted a little time to make his preparations ; he dismissed the men and went back to his quarters. That afternoon he was walking across the parade ground, deep in talk with two fellow-officers, when some men of his own regiment, men who but a few hours before had sworn obedience to him, shot him and killed him instantly. The two officers with him turned and ran towards the town fort with the sepoyes after them ; one reached the fort unharmed, but the other, a Lieutenant Turnbull of the Revenue Department, took refuge in a tree, where the mutineers fired at him until he died.

The bungalows went up in flames ; the prisoners were released from their gaol ; if any officers had delayed making their escape, or stayed to make one last appeal to the men, they were shot on sight. The next move was towards the town.

The Rani of Jhansi had shut herself up in her palace ; whereupon the mutineers threatened to kill her if she dared comply with any requests for assistance from the English in the town fort. This was all a little theatrical, for the Rani and the sepoyes understood one another pretty well :

but it provided a decent excuse for the palace guards to throw in their lot with the mutiny.

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Up in the fort were Captain Burgess of the Revenue Department, Major Skene and his wife, Captain Gordon of the Madras Native Infantry, Dr. McEgan of the 12th Native Infantry and his wife, Lieutenant Powys of the 61st Native Infantry on civil employ with the Canal Department, Mrs. Browne, wife of the Deputy Commissioner of Jalowan with her child and sister, and the English subordinates of the various Government departments with their families. They had piled up great rocks against the gates to prevent their being burst in ; but they had neither ammunition nor provisions to stand a regular siege.

When the mutineers made their first attack in the early evening following Dunlop's murder they were driven back by a withering fire, and decided not to make an assault again until they were better equipped to do so. The next morning three gentlemen called Andrews, Purcell, and Scott crept out of the fort disguised as Mussulmans, with the hope of making their way privately to the Rani and begging her for aid.

But they had hardly got into the town before they were caught and taken captive to the palace.

The Rani refused to see them. She said that "she had no concern with the English swine," words that were tantamount to a death warrant. The three men were taken outside the palace gates and there killed.

In the afternoon a second assault was made upon the fort, and was again unsuccessful. It is fairly safe to say that the mutineers had not their heart in it, for there was to be another comedy between them and the Rani. This time they threatened her with instant death if she did not give them all the assistance in her power. Secretly delighted, but openly unwilling, she supplied them with a thousand men and two heavy guns which had been buried in the palace gardens. The next day an attack was made in earnest. The little band in the fort held out for hours. At last, when their ammunition was almost exhausted, Major Skene begged for a parley. If they surrendered, he said, would the mutineers promise to spare their lives, for otherwise they were determined to die where they stood? The mutineers knew very well that Skene had too many women and children with him to talk seriously about dying to the last man, but they agreed to spare everybody in the

fort, and sealed their agreement with the most solemn promises. . . .

About five in the afternoon news was spread about Jhansi that the English were coming down, and people went flocking out to see them. But here was no garrison marching out with the honours of war. That promise had lasted for just so long as it took Skene and his men to open their gates ; for just so long as it took the mutineers to separate the men from the women. It was a sorry procession that came down the hill—every man's arms were bound securely behind his back, and the women and children were being herded along in the rear like so many cattle.

If ever the Rani of Jhansi knew the sweetness of revenge it must have been for this day's work. The English were driven to a little garden along the town's edge, a garden where the trees grew in straight lines. There they were tied in two rows, the men in front and the women and children behind, so that the women might see their husbands killed and then their children ; and when this pleasant business had been arranged a few men stepped up with their swords drawn and began to work their way down the line of men. . . .

For three days the bodies were left bound to

the tree trunks, after which the strong Indian sun made them altogether too offensive, and they were taken away and thrown hurriedly into a pit.

That was how the Devil's Wind blew through Jhansi.

§

Meanwhile Colonel Neill had begun his advance from Calcutta. He had in mind a march of some six hundred miles at least, to Cawnpore, the nearest city of Oudh ; stopping on the way at Benares and Allahabad to see that everything there was as it should be. He had sent a small force on in advance, one hundred and ten men of the 84th Foot and fifteen Madras Fusiliers, a force which was destined to endure the horrors of Lucknow. He himself, with the main body of Madras Fusiliers, arrived in Benares on June 3.

The problem he had to contend with was this. For some unknown reason there were only two battalions of white troops along all the six hundred miles between Calcutta and Cawnpore—one in Calcutta itself, and one in Dinapore, under the command of an elderly and lethargic gentleman called Major-General Lloyd. And while this particular stretch of country was not so explosive as the districts which lay further west, none the

less it contained two extremely important cities and a number of minor stations, and if the mutiny were allowed to show its head in these places things would go hard with Calcutta, and with any relieving force which tried to make its way up country.

But on the very day of his arrival at Benares there had come news of a mutiny in Azimgarh, sixty miles to the north-west, and he told Colonel Ponsonby, the cavalry officer in command of Benares, that he had better disarm his sepoys at once.

Ponsonby's native garrison consisted of the 37th Native Infantry, the 13th Irregular Cavalry, and the Irregular Ludhiana Regiment of Sikhs ; with them was a European battery under Captain Olpherts. The Sikhs could probably be relied upon to side with the English.

Somehow the business was badly bungled, no doubt because neither Ponsonby nor Neill had had any experience in such matters. At any rate, the 37th were being quietly disarmed on the evening of July 4, with Olpherts's battery facing them as an ordinary precaution, when suddenly some Europeans of the 10th Foot appeared on one side of the parade ground, and the Sikhs and Cavalry on the other. Whether Neill or Ponsonby was responsible for this foolish

move there is no telling—perhaps they concocted it between them ; but, as a natural consequence, the sepoys were terrified into seizing the arms they had just laid down and opening fire on the 10th. The 10th returned their fire, and Olpherts opened up with his batteries. The Sikhs were coming up to help the English, when one of the Irregular Cavalry, who rode behind them, took a shot at his commanding officer ; whereupon the Sikhs lost their heads and began to attack Olpherts's battery. It was a pretty piece of confusion.

Inevitably the Sikhs and the sepoys and the Irregulars turned and fled, spreading out into the country round ; inevitably there were rumours of a "massacre" by the English ; and the angry Neill was held up in Benares, trying to straighten things out.

He did not arrive in Allahabad until June 11.

There were no English troops in Allahabad ; an amazing oversight, for the city stood at the junction of the sacred Ganges and the Jumna, and was considered a very holy place indeed, and any holy place in India is also a dangerous place. Moreover, its fortress, which stood between the city and the river junction, commanded all the roads into Oudh and Delhi, and contained a fair-sized arsenal. During May the English had

all moved into this fortress, but the authorities had not thought of sending them any troops, although Dinapore was not so far away.

On May 19 the 6th Native Infantry (which, with an Irregular Corps of Sikhs, formed the garrison) had declared its anxiety to be sent against the mutineers in Delhi. This offer was made in apparent sincerity, and the English officers were highly gratified. Up to June 4 all went well ; Neill was known to be advancing, and 1500 bullocks had been collected against his arrival, to provide transport for his troops in their advance onwards into Oudh.

With touching optimism it was hoped that Neill's disarming parade had been kept secret from the Allahabad garrison ; the sepoys there were paraded on the evening of June 6, and a congratulatory message from Lord Canning was read to them, thanking them for their loyal offer of help against Delhi. Scarcely had they disbanded, however, when news of a "massacre" in Benares was whispered round among them.

It took a very short time to turn this loyal regiment into a band of mutineers. Their officers were still strolling in their lines when the regiment broke out, shot down those who could not get away, and managed to catch six cadet officers who had just arrived from England and were still

unposted. Many English civilians, not expecting an attack after all the loyal demonstrations they had listened to, were taking the cool of the evening outside their fortress ; and those who could not get back in time were killed by the sepoys and their inevitable companions, the city *bad-mashes*. Scarcely an hour after the 6th Native Regiment had heard the grateful words of its Governor-General that same regiment was proclaiming a Mogul empire up and down the streets of Allahabad.

As at Jhansi, words of "loyalty" and words of hatred could be uttered almost in the same breath.

But the English were safe inside their fort, and intended to hold it. Their great fear was whether the Sikhs, who had come in with them, would remain friendly or no. The Sikhs wavered a little, decided to remain faithful, opened the fort's store of liquors and got royally drunk. Five days later Neill arrived from Benares, bringing reinforcements and cholera.

The whole countryside had now burst into open insurrection, and Neill's hopes of a peaceful march onwards towards Cawnpore and Lucknow were completely checked. Half of his force was sick, and he himself could not move from his bed ; but he began to direct one of the most

vicious repressive campaigns in the history of the mutiny.

There was a good deal of excuse for him. He had no one to rely on but himself, and he knew that if the district about Allahabad once got out of hand all the roads into Oudh and Delhi would be stopped, perhaps for months, and future relieving armies from Calcutta would be deprived of their base. It was a great responsibility.

None the less, his repression was a shameful thing. Six thousand natives lost their lives, and most of them were innocent. Villages were fired over the heads of old women and little children ; hanging parties went out, devising new ways of strangling with a rope, an elephant, and a mango tree ; amateur sportsmen "peppered the niggers" with shotguns ; it was another Bloody Assizes, an orgy of hatred and injustice.

They said in those days that when the Devil's Wind had blown the Devil followed behind.

VI

CAWNPORE : THE PRELUDE TO
TRAGEDY

NEILL'S ill-luck spelled disaster for Cawnpore. His foolish behaviour at Benares ; the cholera he brought along with him to Allahabad ; that general uprising which, threatening the very safety of Calcutta, pushed him into the hideous work of reprisal ; all these prevented his marching on with his reinforcements. If he had arrived in the middle days of June there would have been no story of Cawnpore, or at least no story so terrible as the one which must now be told. But he was still at Allahabad on June 30, when Havelock took over his command ; and, so far as the tragedy of Cawnpore is concerned, Havelock was only heard off-stage, like an elderly and unromantic Fortinbras, just as the final curtain descended.

Cawnpore and Lucknow were the two great cities of Oudh, and around them and Delhi most of the events of the mutiny now began to assemble themselves. Lucknow, that natural centre of

disaffection in the province, was destined to a long and heroic siege ; Cawnpore to unredeemed disaster.

Cawnpore was not a beautiful city, nor had it a very savoury reputation. In the days before Oudh was annexed by Lord Dalhousie it had been a great refuge for criminals and political offenders, and somehow this character still clung to it. No man was safe from robbery along its highways, and its bazaar was still haunted by cut-throats of every description. But lying as it did along the southern bank of the Ganges, it was an emporium of the traffic of the rich plains of Bengal, and therefore a city of the first importance. It was two hundred and fifty miles from Delhi and forty miles from Lucknow ; and its inhabitants numbered some sixty thousand Hindus and Muhammadans.

You would suppose that a garrison in such a place would have contained a fair proportion of English soldiers : actually they numbered about three hundred—that is, sixty artillerymen with six guns, sixty men of the 84th Foot, sixty-five men of the Madras Fusiliers, seventy-eight invalids of the 32nd Foot, and the various officers of the native regiments. With the families of officers and civil servants the total European population amounted to about one thousand :

and in the event of mutiny they had a good three thousand sepoys to reckon with.

The garrison was commanded by Major-General Sir Hugh Wheeler, an old and distinguished officer who had done service in Afghanistan and the Punjab, and was deeply respected by his sepoys. His single fault was that he had known them too long ; he remembered their gallantry and faithfulness in the old days ; and he could not bring himself to believe that his children, his *babalog*, would ever turn against him. He was too wise a man, of course, not to watch them closely when the first signs of mutiny appeared in Dum dum and Barrackpore ; and when the news of Meerut and Delhi came in, he was prepared for trouble. At the worst, I think, he expected a wholesale desertion, when his sepoys would naturally go off to Delhi or Lucknow : and he would have been less inclined to blame them for that than he would the inefficiency of the officers who commanded them—about whom he had very few illusions.

They had made, so far as they could, a little England out of the cantonments at Cawnpore, which stretched a good six miles along the river's bank below the city. Here you could find a church, a Roman Catholic chapel, a mission of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel ;

there was a race-course, a theatre (for amateur performances), a Freemasons' Lodge, a racket-court, a library, news-rooms and billiard-rooms, a bandstand ; there was a breakfast club, an ice club for the manufacture and supply of ice, and a market where quails, wild ducks, snipe, and black partridges were sold in season for a very reasonable price.

Perhaps they did not live very tidily, in those days before " Indian Army " was a phrase that really amounted to something. Their bungalows stood, each in its ill-kept four or five acres, with a crumbling mound and a ditch and a ragged boundary hedge of prickly pear ; their living-rooms, even the best of them, had succumbed to the effects of an enervating climate—they were sometimes magnificent, but they were never very clean. The garrison yawned about its duties, and its whole existence was a little somnolent, a little disillusioned.

But there was one very pleasant feature in the life at Cawnpore, and that was the friendship and hospitality of the Nana Sahib, who lived at Bithoor, not twelve miles from the city. Officers were always welcome at his house, to sit at his generous table and exchange flowery compliments and forget for a time their somewhat unromantic and trivial existence. He would

give them bits of jewellery from time to time, and liked to hear all the latest news from England, though he could not speak the language himself and apparently never tried to learn it. He was a jovial man—*tung admi*, as his secretary said, “a tight man,” with a round face and body, and very wild, brilliant, and restless eyes.

Curiously enough, England had no more bitter enemy throughout the length and breadth of India.

One cannot understand the Nana Sahib without knowing something of his past history. He was the adopted son of Baji Rao II, seventh Peshwa of Poonah, one of the great Mahratta princes, whom the British had dethroned in 1817, “urged by that painful necessity of taking what belongs to others, which is the inevitable result of all our dealings with Oriental powers.” Baji Rao had been accused of treachery, and faithlessness, and bad internal government, and had been driven to fight the battle of Kirkee, where the English defeated him handsomely. A part of his enormous revenues were given back to him as a pension, and he settled down to a quiet life at Bithoor; when he died in 1851 his pension died with him.

His adopted son’s real name was Dundhu Punt, but he held the courtesy title of Maharajah of

Bithoor, and was called the Nana Sahib, a name generally given to maharajahs. He found himself with a considerable fortune on his father's death—something like £300,000, which represented the late Peshwa's personal property ; but he was by no means satisfied. He urged, with what seems perfect justice, that the " pension " which his father had received annually from the English was a perpetual rent-charge, and should therefore be paid to him as the rightful heir. The English, on their side, declared that the " pension " was a life grant, for in their written agreement with Baji Rao no mention had been made of heirs.

The Nana Sahib was not merely out for money ; he firmly believed that his father's soul, by the denial of his adopted son's property rights, had been condemned to eternal damnation. For a man must leave a son " to inherit his possessions, perpetuate his name, and apply the torch to his funeral pyre " : the last office might be performed by none other than a filial hand. Yet the Hindu law did not recognise confiscation ; and since the British had confiscated the Nana Sahib's property, the Nana Sahib was *ipso facto* no longer an adopted son. The British, in effect, had damned his father's soul. . . .

He appealed to London. He sent over his

Secretary, a prepossessing ex-waiter called Azimullah whose fluent English, easy manners, and romantic appearance made him a great favourite in some of the best drawing-rooms. But the pension was not granted, and Azimullah returned to India by way of Constantinople. Here, as luck would have it, his arrival coincided with the news of an Allied repulse at Sebastopol—British fortunes in the Crimean War were at their lowest ebb. Azimullah, convinced that the Russians “have beaten the French and English together,” reported to his master that British power was now definitely on the wane—not only in India but all over the world.

And so the Nana began to dream of power : he began to see himself as Peshwa of Poonah and leader of the Mahrattas, those fierce mountaineers who had once triumphed over the Portuguese and held a Mogul Emperor prisoner in his own palace. He preserved all the outward appearances of an Anglomaniac ; his terrific hospitality went on—at his table you might find a bedroom towel doing duty as napkin, the soup served up in a trifle dish, and your pudding brought in on a soup-plate ; his reception-rooms were stuffed with the more excruciating products of Birmingham ; his conveyances were always at the service of the ladies ; his guest-rooms generally housed

some English couple, stopping overnight on their way in or out of Cawnpore ; his wide and beneficent smile never wavered.

But there was another and more dubious side to him. He had gathered about him a small army of lazy ruffians, and would make fantastic progresses about the countryside. His retinue then would be a thing to gape at—"some mounted on raw-boned, long-tailed horses, smeared with coarse paint, some straggling along under the weight of clubs, partizans, brass blunderbusses, and long matchlocks, of which the stock is studded with glass beads, and the muzzle shaped into the semblance of a dragon's mouth." It was rumoured in the native city that he kept his father's widows in miserable captivity, and that he was a tyrant in his family. His private life, into the mysteries of which no English officer had ever peered, was dragged out in a condition of vicious ennui ; there were rooms in the palace of Bithoor decorated in a most peculiar style, a style which would have disgusted the most hardened Anglo-Indian no less than the orgies which it inspired. In fact, the Nana Sahib was just another Eastern nobleman whom his conquerors had condemned to a perfectly useless existence.

In Calcutta he was suspect because he had made complaints in London, because he was a

man with a grievance ; in Lucknow he was suspect because, on his last visit there, he had behaved with a good deal of insolence ; but in Cawnpore he was impeccable, the Englishman's best friend.

To this man, when the first rumours of mutiny were heard, went Mr. Hillersdon, the Resident Magistrate. The Nana was profuse in his offers of help. The English ladies could be sent for safety to his palace at Bithoor, or, failing that, he could at least make himself responsible for guarding the Treasury and the Magazine. Although someone was wise enough not to trust him as a protector of ladies, he was told that the services of his guards would be very gratefully received, should occasion arise. And all this, as we know now, in spite of warnings from the outside. *Quos Deus vult perdere. . . .*

§

On May 16 Sir Hugh Wheeler telegraphed to Lord Canning—"As far as I have means of judging, the troops are at present well disposed ; however, there is much excitement in consequence of events elsewhere." He might, perhaps, have been more explicit ; the "excitement" was nothing less than genuine fear. There were wild

rumours in circulation—it was said that the sepoys were to be assembled on an undermined parade ground and blown into the air! On the 18th he telegraphed—"All at Cawnpore quiet, but excitement continues among the people." Could Canning see the real significance of these two messages as clearly as we can now? What Wheeler actually faced was the double peril of a mutinous garrison and an insurgent populace.

But Wheeler himself was already somewhat easier in his mind. A message had come through from Agra—"The final advance upon Delhi will soon be made. The insurgents can only be about three thousand in number, and are said to cling about the walls of Delhi, where they have put up a puppet king. . . . The country around Meerut will soon be quite restored to order. In our lower districts they are watched, and calm and expert policy will soon reassure the public mind; the plague is in truth stayed." Wheeler had no reason to disbelieve that message, but whoever sent it had made a grave blunder.

It was now earnestly believed in Cawnpore that Delhi would be retaken within a few days, and that with its fall the fast-rising mutiny would collapse. None the less, Wheeler decided to put the Europeans in his care into some place of safety.

His choice had been severely criticised, but always in the light of knowledge which he never possessed ; what he expected was a mild crisis, and he chose a place most suited to meet that kind of emergency. It was called "the hospital barracks," and consisted of two single-storied buildings, one wholly of stone, the other with a thatched roof, with verandahs all round them and the usual out-buildings. The buildings stood at right angles to each other, and each contained quarters of some kind within it.

Wheeler's entrenchments were not very prepossessing. His earthworks were no more than four feet high, and the soil they had been made of was so crumbling and so friable that they were in no sense bullet proof. As for the artillery, ammunition, and supplies with which he furnished this haven of refuge, they were "weak, scanty, and insufficient."

It has always been said that he should have chosen the Magazine, a building especially constructed to stand a siege. But he never expected to stand a siege : he expected his sepoys to desert him and march off to Delhi, after which he would get his people into boats and send them into Allahabad. So far as he was concerned the Magazine was too far from the sepoy lines ; to withdraw all his officers to a spot so remote

would certainly have provoked a mutiny. The Magazine had a native guard a withdraw that guard would also have a mutiny. Whereas the "hospital" were near the sepoy lines, and had so that a good deal of activity around it not have seemed very suspicious. Wainly did the best that he could. (that he began the work of fortification graphed to Canning—"All well excitement less."

He was wrong. He had scarcely telegram when there came a report that cavalry had been sending round messages to the other regiments, asking them if they (the cavalry) could count on their support, for the English were going to subject them all to some fearful outrage. Wheeler reported this in a fresh telegram, which closed with the ominous words—"Reports just received that crisis is approaching here." This was May 21.

On May 22, like a fat and genial vulture, the Nana Sahib moved into his town house in Cawnpore. "Matters took a favourable turn about half-past seven p.m. yesterday" ran Wheeler's next message. "Up to that time it appears that an outbreak was imminent. The danger gave way before a quiet address to the men by their

commandant through some native officers. . . . This morning two guns and three hundred men were brought in by the Maharajah of Bithoor." These were the Nana's promised guards, three hundred ragged Mahrattas, who dispersed to their stations at the Treasury and the Magazine. The two most important places in the cantonments had been given into the hands of the enemy.

There were other signs of disaster, and easier to read. Sir Henry Lawrence had been asked to send some help from Lucknow. Lawrence had obtained "plenary military authority in Oudh," which amounted to a promotion over Wheeler's head, and Wheeler had been generous enough not to complain : hence the reinforcements, which Lawrence could ill spare, but which he sent as a gesture of gratitude. Their arrival, on this same ill-omened May 22, must seem rather curious to those who get their ideas of British behaviour in India from, shall we say, the pages of Rudyard Kipling. "The general was delighted," says a private letter written to Secretary Edmonstone, "to hear of the arrival of the Europeans. At six a.m. I went out to have a look at the various places, and since I have been in India have never witnessed such a scene of confusion, fright, and bad arrangement as the European barracks presented. Four guns were in position loaded, with

European artillerymen in nightcaps and wide-awakes and side-arms on, hanging to the guns in groups, looking like melodramatic buccaneers. People of all kinds, of every colour and sect, and profession, were crowding into the barracks . . . all in terror of the imaginary foe ; ladies sitting down at the rough mess-tables in the barracks, women suckling infants, ayahs and children in all directions, and—officers too ! In short, as I have written to Sir Henry Lawrence, I saw quite enough to convince me that if any insurrection takes place we shall have no one to thank but ourselves.” The writer went on to say that the courageous behaviour of Sir Hugh Wheeler might yet save the day. “ He has all his doors and windows open all night, and has never thought of moving, or of allowing his family to move.”

But somehow that scene of confusion, more than anything else that had happened, reads like the prelude to tragedy.

On May 24, which was Queen Victoria’s birthday, the customary salute was not fired in case it might alarm the sepoys. On May 26 Wheeler telegraphed—“ All tranquil here. . . . Now I hope I may preserve the peace of this very important station without bloodshed.” On May 30—“ The European 32nd Foot, sent by

Sir Henry Lawrence, are preparing to return this evening to Lucknow, where considerable uneasiness is felt." On May 31—"We are all right as yet, and I hope we may continue so."

The advance guard of Neill's proposed reinforcements had arrived from Benares, and Wheeler was making daily visits to the sepoy lines, where he held long conversations with the men and tried to assure them that their fears were unfounded. They answered freely enough, but they were still plainly anxious. "All well here," Wheeler telegraphed on June 3, "but subject to constant fits of excitement." And later on the same day, "I have sent him (Sir Henry Lawrence) by dak gharries out of my small force two officers and fifty men, Her Majesty's 84th Foot. . . . This leaves me weak, but I trust to holding my own until more Europeans arrive."

Thus, on a note of courage and hopefulness, ended the last message Canning was ever to receive from him.

§

Ever since that wretched show put up by Lawrence's reinforcements the sepoys were bound to revolt : their own fears were given substance

by more obvious fears on the other side. And then the spectacle of Wheeler throwing up defences which he could not hope to defend, and of the Europeans deserting their homes and flying off to so doubtful a place of refuge ! And the European gunners placing their guns in position ! The sepoys felt themselves mistrusted and threatened ; and however much they liked to persuade themselves to the contrary, they knew that they *ought* to be mistrusted.

For their plots had gone deeper than Sir Hugh ever suspected. Their leaders were the 2nd Cavalry, a regiment which had behaved badly before and which now definitely included murder in its programme of mutiny. The infantry still wanted no more than simple desertion ; there was a certain lack of agreement about the time of the uprising and who should lead it. Otherwise everything was ready.

One evening the Nana Sahib was observed on the river's bank deep in talk with some native officers of the 2nd Cavalry. He was asked, a little anxiously, what this meant, and replied with the most disarming frankness that he was telling them how best to keep their men quiet. For himself, he could not condemn mutiny enough, but he hoped his presence would do much to keep the peace in Cawnpore.

And so to the night of June 4.

The 2nd Cavalry and the 1st Native Infantry were now ready for immediate action. There was some firing of pistols, a great lighting of bonfires, a midnight ride to Nawab-gunj, where the Nana's russians "guarded" the Treasury. The Infantry followed hard after their comrades, burning and plundering as they went ; but they did not touch the Christians, for they had no taste for murder as yet. Their faces were resolutely set towards the Treasury, and beyond that—Delhi.

When the morning of June 5 dawned, the 53rd and 56th Native Infantry were still at their posts : they had stood to arms all night, and were now dismissed. Somewhere about nine o'clock in the morning a trooper of the 2nd Cavalry was seen riding towards their lines. He had a brief message for them : If they did not hurry they would lose their share of the Treasury spoils. It was enough to send them rushing for their colours and treasure chest, and so great was the noise they made that Wheeler, thinking them to be in open mutiny, ordered a battery to fire on them from the entrenchments.

There were three eye-witnesses of that event who lived to tell of it. Two declare that there was no messenger from the Cavalry ; one of

these two says that the 53rd and 56th "were off, without anyone missing them, between 8 and 9 o'clock," the other that they were peacefully cooking when "they were literally driven from us by nine-pounders." The third eye-witness asserts, with equal assurance, "We could see the two regiments drawn up in columns on their parade ground, showing a defying front, but a shot or two from our long gun immediately dispersed them." Such contradictions are always to be met with in any account of the Indian Mutiny ; and one is at liberty to choose the most likely or the most pleasing. But it is generally supposed that Wheeler did fire a shot or two, and that, since he was neither a tyrant nor a fool, he had good reason for doing so.

When the two regiments joined their comrades they plundered the Treasury of some £200,000 and set off for Kullianpore, the first stage on their road to Delhi. Meanwhile, a deputation of Cavalry native officers waited on the Nana Sahib. What did he propose to do—would he side with them or with the English? The Nana Sahib affected surprise at so unnecessary a question. He laid his hands on the officers' heads. "I am altogether yours," he said.

After their departure, he went into conference with his advisers. His great chance had come, he could almost see himself as Peshwa of Poonah ; but he knew that those sepoys must never be allowed to march on for Delhi. They were to be his army, and what chances had *he* in Delhi ?

They might desert him there, vowing allegiance to the King, or the King's court might suppress him, or a thousand and one other things might happen : for how could he, last of a great Mahratta dynasty, expect any welcome in a city which had once known the sorrows of Mahratta rule ? But in Cawnpore he could be paramount. In Cawnpore he could gather a great army. And then he would not give a snap of the fingers for Delhi, and the miserable family which was supposed to rule it. As for the English, he believed that their power was on the wane, and he knew that Lucknow could send no assistance, and that no troops could come as yet from Benares, Alla-habad, or Agra. The English in Cawnpore were already condemned to death.

He hurried after the mutineers and caught them up in Kullianpore. The fine irony of the part he had played with the English was now over : the mask was off, and he had become a

plain villain. He did not have any great difficulty in persuading the sepoys to come back with him : he offered them one gold bangle apiece, and spoke of untouched plunder still waiting them in Cawnpore. His peroration was a little more exalted—they should be ashamed to leave the city while a single Christian was alive there. So they turned back ; and that is why, in the neighbourhood of Cawnpore, the mutiny is still spoken of as “The Sheeps’ Mutiny.”

He had now four good and well-organised regiments at his disposal. (It should be remembered that the native officers were so trained that they could manage and lead their regiments in the event of the death or the absence of white officers : hence the orderly show sometimes put up by individual regiments in the Mutiny.) On the morning of June 6 this murderous army re-entered the city.

On that same morning the Nana, now self-proclaimed sovereign of the Mahrattas, sent a message to Sir Hugh Wheeler, announcing his intention of attacking at once. Sir Hugh was dumbfounded, and the English, not daring to face the truth, told themselves that it was a joke, it *must* be a joke ; in remarkably poor taste, of course, but after all the Nana was not an Englishman. . . .

And then they saw two guns being dragged up and trained upon their entrenchments : and, with a horrid sense of calamity, they knew that it was not a joke after all.

VII

"THE FORT OF DESPAIR"

EVERY day of the next three weeks is weighted down with an intolerable burden. It is not the wounds and the suffering, the despair and insanity, which one remembers longest ; but a fiery June sky, and the burning stagnant winds which moved under it. In that intolerable heat all the details of the siege blur and shift together.

The first gun was fired, and the first shot "glided" over Wheeler's earthwork and went bounding across the baked earth. Gunner Macguire watched it with a sort of fascination and made no attempt to get out of its way : they laid his smashed body in a blanket, to wait for burial until nightfall. A dismal wail went up from the women and children in the two barrack houses, though after that first day they uttered no sound except in pain. Every man moved to his position. The siege had begun.

You must imagine a rectangle of earthworks, scarcely breast high, with two frail-looking build-

ings in the centre of it. It lay in the middle of a flat plain, flat as only Bengal can be, and all around it—anywhere from three to eight hundred yards away—were a number of imposing buildings, ready for enemy riflemen. Four holes had been knocked in the entrenchment's mud wall for the four batteries, whose gunners must stand exposed to fire all day long : at every fifteen paces there crouched an infantryman with ten loaded rifles beside him. There was no refuge from the sun, and scarcely any cover from the storm of grape and shot which swept across day after day. Small wonder that Azimullah called this death-trap "the fort of despair."

It was the season when European vitality was at its lowest ebb ; when those who could went to the hills, and those who could not stayed in their shaded rooms for most of the day and supported—with fans and baths and frequent changes of linen—some feeble pretence of living. The hospital barracks had no baths at all and offered no privacy. On the very first day of the bombardment all the doors were shot away ; then the fans went and all the furniture ; and round shot careered through the bare rooms, doing frightful execution among those who crowded the floors ; and the stifling air was filled with the sharp splinters of what had once been tables and

chairs and window-frames. These were the quarters of the women and children, the sick and the infirm.

What the siege amounted to was the beating of some thousand souls to death with twenty-four pounders : an action so inglorious that it only acquired merit because of the magnificence of its victims, who for those horrible weeks lived a whole epic. And the component parts of an epic are so often misery and filth and an indecent suffering, and brief moments of heroism and snatches of brave speech.

Apart from the adjacent buildings, of which the sepoy made full use, there were two positions of peculiar danger to the English—a small church on the south-east, which was smashed at last with an incredibly big charge rammed into an eight-pounder ; and a row of unfinished barracks to the south-west. Three of these came altogether too close to the English lines, and detachments were sent out to occupy two of them : the sepoy held the third. Some civil engineers—"the railway gentlemen"—managed the defence of one all by themselves ; they were not professional soldiers but they had a good aim and a great deal of courage. The other was taken over by Captain Jenkins and a few regulars.

There was little sleep for these outposts ; day

and night a guerilla warfare had to be kept up with their neighbours the mutineers ; and when they snatched a brief rest at night, or a short relief from the sun, they "squeezed down between the edges of the bricks" (the piles of unfinished material) and thought themselves as well off as if they had been lying on beds of down.

In many ways they were more fortunate than their comrades within the entrenchment. They were busy all the time, and death was more likely to come quickly and cleanly. And they were spared the miserable scenes which those others had to endure. There was always, for them, the women and children to think of. Some of these women were far gone with child, and not a few gave birth during the siege ; these poor souls and their families are something one would rather forget.

Wheeler broke down very soon under the burden of age and misery, and delegated his duties to Captain Moore, a tall blue-eyed Irishman, with a bearing "so frank and genial that all men loved him." He had been wounded on the first day of the siege, and his arm was in a sling, but he was constantly in the positions of most danger, and it was he who led the innumerable counter-attacks, when the mutineers came too close and a band of men had to rush out of

the entrenchment and drive them away. There are other names that will not be forgotten—Vibart, and Jenkins, and Prout, and Turnbull, and Ashe, and Delafosse, and Mowbray-Thomson. They were fighting a losing battle from the very beginning, but there was just a faint hope of relief from Allahabad or Lucknow, and that is how they held for three weeks a place that was not fit to stand a three days' bombardment.

And the non-combatants equalled them in courage—the eighty men and all the women. Moncrieff, the chaplain, was constantly moving from post to post ; he could never get the whole garrison together, or even a part of it, but there was sometimes a little group of men who could find time to say a prayer with him ; they were men of the Bible, most of them, and would not have been happy without him. He did not seem to mind exposing himself, and by some miracle was kept unhurt until the end of the siege.

The women have often been compared to those women of Carthage who made some incredible bowstrings out of their hair : these women of Cawnpore, more prosaically, giving up their stockings to be filled with shot, when the bores of the guns wore out and the ordinary canister could not be rammed home. Such of them as could be spared from nursing their own

wounded, or looking after the children and the sick, would help to bind up wounds and to lay the dead out. They fought off the heat, and the hysteria, and somehow, torn and dirty as they were, rose above all the niceties of modesty and decorum which they had been taught to cherish.

At nightfall men "buried" the dead, which grew more numerous with each day. They would take them out stealthily and throw them down a well which lay some two hundred yards from the entrenchment.

There was another well inside. Its framework of brick which offered the drawer some meagre protection was soon shot away; then the machinery went; and thereafter the bucket had to be drawn up hand over hand from a depth of something like sixty feet. John Mackillop of the Civil Service undertook this extremely perilous work, saying that he was no fighting man, but would make himself useful where he could. His escapes were more numerous than can be told, but in less than a week he was shot through the groin, and died with an entreaty on his lips that they would bring water to a lady who had just asked it of him.

The water gave out not long after, and they were reduced to sucking pieces of old water-bags and scraps of canvas and leather. As for the

food, it went almost as quickly, and the time came when a handful of peas and a handful of flour was the daily ration. Once an old horse wandered up at night near the entrenchment. He was brought in, hacked up, and eaten half raw : his head "and some mysteries of his body" being stewed into soup. And then there came a time when horse flesh would have seemed the greatest delicacy, and a scavenger dog that appeared from nowhere was hunted down, and killed, and ravenously eaten. But before that the greatest tragedy of all had happened.

One evening, about a week after the commencement of the siege, the two barrack houses burst into flames. One of them had a thatched roof, and though this roof had been covered with some protection of tiles and bricks, in the end the inevitable occurred. As the flames mounted, the sepoys redoubled their fire ; but the English managed to pull out all of their sick but two artillerymen. It was a terrible blow. The few hundred surviving women and children were forced into the wretched protection of the breast-works by day ; the canvas shelters erected to keep the sun off them were shot down as soon as put up ; and at night, shivering in their own clothes, the damp steaming ground filled them with ague. Worse still, all the hospital stores and

surgical instruments had been destroyed in the flames ; there was nothing to treat the wounded with, and the dying had to be left to die untended.

The few faithful sepoys who had chosen to fight with the English were now told to go : there was no food for them, and no shelter : and they left the horrors within for a certain death without. A terrible reward for loyalty, but there was little choice. The defenders had already decided what to do with their prisoners : they could neither be released nor kept : so they were securely bound and left where they had been captured, where the sun or, more mercifully, the bombardment of their own comrades, put an end to them.

And now the sufferings of the little band of English increased beyond either endurance or telling. Seven or eight of those huddled wretches might be killed or wounded at one shot. A Mrs. White, walking with her husband, carried a twin child at either shoulder. A shot killed the father, broke both the mother's elbows, and severely injured one of the children. Captain Mowbray-Thomson says that he saw her afterwards in the main-guard (a projection of the earthwork to the south) lying on her back with a child at each breast " while the mother's bosom

refused not what her arms had no power to administer."

After a week all the fifty-nine artillerymen had either been killed or injured, and their place was taken by volunteers—bandsmen and opium agents and telegraph clerks—who stood little chance when they had to fire six-pound shots from damaged nine-pounders. The single howitzer was soon knocked clean off its carriage, one gun lost its entire muzzle, others had their sides smashed in or their vents blown out, until at length the artillery was reduced to two pieces which were reserved in case of assault.

Not that the sepoys believed in assault. They had tried it once or twice, but somehow the garrison's fire never slackened, however much its numbers might have been decreased. So it was better to fire volleys in from surrounding points of vantage ; and to follow each volley with a wild yell of defiance ; and sometimes to appear dancing in the windows ; or, if you had taken more than enough *bhang*, to come out and perform some crazy fandango in the open, when the English invariably put an end to you. The rebels were increasing in numbers now : the mutineers from Azimgarh had come in, and the 4th and 5th Oudh Irregulars : and half of them lazed ingloriously in the town, until the Cawn-

pore women ridiculed them back into the plain and the firing line. But there were always enough of them to make it intolerable for that pitiful and heroic and desperate entrenchment.

On Sunday, June 14, Wheeler had managed to send a messenger through to Henry Lawrence in Lucknow. "We want aid ! aid ! aid !" the message ended. "If we had 200 men we could punish the scoundrels and aid you." But Lawrence had no help for them ; he was on the point of being besieged himself. "God grant you His protection," he wrote back on June 16. Wheeler's answer was a message of astonishing courage, minimising his own difficulties, asserting that they had provisions for two weeks, and that troops were reported advancing from Allahabad. "We trust in God, and if our exertions here assist your safety it will be a consolation to know that our friends appreciate our devotion."

One midnight Captain Moore went out with twenty men, crept into the church enclosure, spiked the guns there, rushed on to the mess house, blew up two twenty-four pounders and spiked two smaller guns. In an hour they had returned, with four wounded and one left behind dead. That was the last attack the English made.

Sunstroke had been added to the horrors of

lead and iron ; there was the agony of thirst ; and on some faces could be seen that blank look which precedes insanity. Sleep was almost impossible. There was fever, and hunger, and death that grew heavier every day.

On June 23, the centenary of Plassey, the day that prophecy had spoken of as marking the end of English rule in India, the sepoys made a concerted attack.

They came on, making for all sides of the entrenchment at once ; first the cavalry, too impetuous by half, their saddles emptied before they could get within striking distance ; then the infantry, coming up cautiously behind bales of cotton. These bales were not thick enough to resist the defenders' fire, but after the fight was over were dragged in and made to stop up some of the worst gaps in the entrenchment. The attack had been an ignominious failure.

But the sepoy could afford to wait. On June 24 Wheeler got one last desperate message through to Lucknow. " Only British spirit remains. Surely we are not to die like rats in a cage."

They were : but in another and more fearful trap.

Three weeks had passed, and the Nana Sahib was beginning to grow restless. His men were

drifting away, satisfied with the plunder they had got in Cawnpore. Perhaps a relief might come up from Allahabad before he could finish his slaughter. There were the beginnings of a counter-movement in his own ranks : some Moslem notable was intriguing against him. And so a message was sent in to the entrenchment, written in Azimullah's hand. "To the subjects of Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria," it ran. "All those who are in no way connected with the acts of Lord Dalhousie, and are willing to lay down their arms, shall receive a safe passage to Allahabad."

The English deliberated for a long while. But in truth they had no choice. If they had been all men, they would have voted to continue the siege until their ammunition gave out, and would have died at their posts. But there were the women and children to think of. These could be defended for at best three days longer. So they sent a message back, to the effect that they were prepared to treat, on the understanding that they would give up their guns and treasure, and receive in return free passage to Allahabad in provisioned boats.

That evening, in the Nana's tent (which he preferred to a house, as though a little of the old Mahratta campaigning blood ran in his vast

body), it was decided to massacre the English at the riverside.

The next morning an armistice was declared. The guns ceased fire, and in that unwonted stillness, thankful at the chance of quitting their entrenchment, the gaunt soldiers danced to the rattle of drumsticks on an empty cask, and the poor little shadows of children, allowed their liberty for the first time, made some pathetic attempts at play. The Nana sent another message with more explicit terms—sixty rounds of ammunition per man, carriage for the conveyance of the sick, boats to be provided with flour.

Wheeler and his advisers agreed to these terms, and sent them back to the Nana for his signature. But when the document on which they were written came back in the afternoon it bore an ominous addition just under the Nana's name. The English were to leave their entrenchment that very night.

This Wheeler refused to do, and when threatened with instant bombardment if he would not comply, answered that he had still enough powder left to blow up both armies, and he would far rather put an end to things at once than march out then, all unprepared, or subject his civilians to further misery. The Nana gave in immediately.

And so one more document was drawn up, and taken by the Nana's old tutor—a man called Todd, who had once taught the children at Bithoor. And even then the Nana could not throw off his old mask ; he received the man with the utmost courtesy. He condoled with Wheeler—it was too bad that, after half a century of faithful service, his men should turn against him. But God be praised, said the Nana with a return of all his old benignity, that was over now. He would see that the English were taken care of. They would suffer no more.

All the night of the 26th they packed up what was left of their belongings, and did their best to get the sick and the wounded into some shape for leaving. On the morning of the 27th they left their entrenchment—"tattered in clothing, begrimed with dirt, emaciated in countenance . . . faces that had been beautiful were now chiselled with deep furrows . . . some were sinking into that settled vacancy of look which marks insanity. The old, babbling with confirmed imbecility ; the young raving in not a few cases with wild mania . . ." This was the marching out of one of the bravest garrisons in history.

With that strange naïveté which marked their behaviour throughout the mutiny, the sepoys came crowding about them ; some exclaiming

at the entrenchments, and wondering how men could have held them so long, some offering words of admiration and compassion, some asking for former officers and showing real concern when they heard of their death. "The boats are provisioned," they said, and added, "We will give you sheep and goats, too."

But others held back, and their eyes were not pleasant to look into.

VIII

THE FIRST MASSACRE OF CAWNPORE

THEY had been provided with sixteen elephants and seventy palanquins ; there was a long line of bullock carts for the women and children ; Captain Moore led the advance guard, and Major Vibart of the Second Cavalry brought up the rear, walking all alone amid an escort of mutineers from his own regiment, who insisted on carrying his baggage.

They had perhaps a mile to go. The night before they had held high festival on a double ration of boiled lentils and meal cake, washed down with water that was cloudy with brick-dust and powdered cement. Thus fortified, the men of the advance guard, in their stained flannel and tattered nankeen, stepped out briskly with squared shoulders like an army that has fed well and has nothing to fear ; but their eyes were cast down, and they did not smile at one another.

In the rear, behind the swaying elephants and the dust of the bullock carts, things were not so

well. The sepoys were beginning to crowd insolently upon the procession, and threats were heard and some ugly words. Colonel and Mrs. Ewart fell slowly behind the rest, and Vibart overlooked them, having more than enough to keep his eye on. The colonel was a sick man, carried in a litter by four native bearers, with his wife trudging alongside. The bearers were lazy and refused to bestir themselves, and the colonel could not raise his voice for weakness. So they watched the tail of the procession disappear round a distant corner.

Then they were met by seven or eight of the colonel's regiment, who told the bearers to set down their load and stand back, and mocked the sick man with "Is this not a fine parade, and is it not well dressed up?" : and hacked him to pieces with their swords. Then they turned to Mrs. Ewart and told her that she might go, if she would first give them all she had on her ; and when she had handed over her few pitiful possessions, one of the gang killed her too.

So the first act in the massacre took place : but those in front knew nothing about it, as they trudged across to the Suttee Chowra Ghat, or landing-place, a short mile to the north-west.

At this point a ravine ran down to the Ganges : during summer the bed of the stream was dry,

and looked very like a sandy lane, now broad and now narrow, and very broken underfoot. The high banks on either side of it were crowned with decaying fences. At the foot of the ravine you would have the landing-place on your left —an open space some hundred and fifty yards long by a hundred deep, with high ground to the rear of it covered with prickly pear, and at the end a native village : to the right there was nothing but a steep bank, surmounted by a little Hindu temple, very like an old Dutch summer-house, with steps leading straight into the Ganges. It was dedicated to the god of fishermen.

In this place, which in times of peace might have a certain charm, Tantia Topee, the Nana's lieutenant, had made his dispositions for welcoming the English. Early that morning five hundred men had come down with guns, and certain nobles had been told to put in an appearance, so that there should be no doubt in future as to their complicity.

But the men of the cavalry, instigators of the mutiny and most promising of all the Nana's forces, actually rebelled against the scheme that was put up to them. So the Nana summoned them to his tent in the very early hours, and swore to them, on the word of a royal Brahmin, that what they called a frightful breach of faith

was permissible. He should have known, for the founder of his adopted father's dynasty had gained his power by just such methods.

And now the English were all within the ravine, and its mouth was stopped by a line of sepoys, with the double purpose of keeping their victims from getting out and the townsfolk from getting in. Tantia Topee, on one of the ravine banks, reviewed his dispositions once more. He had a body of infantry concealed in the village : there was a squadron of cavalry on the right bank, just behind the Fishermen's Temple : two guns had been placed on the landing-place side of the river, and two others were on the shore directly opposite, guarded by an entire battalion of infantry and a squadron of cavalry. It was another death trap.

The embarkation began. Ordinary country boats had been provided, heavy unwieldy affairs, roofed with thatch and manned by native rowers : in some few of them a travesty of provisions had been placed. The rowers made no attempt to assist the English, for assistance was not part of their instructions—their instructions being simply to fire the thatch and leap out of the boats at the sound of a bugle call. It was pleasant to rest on their oars and watch the English work.

That was no easy embarkation. Neither plank

nor temporary pier had been provided, so the officers had to wade knee deep in water to hoist their wounded and their women aboard. But at last, at nine a.m., Major Vibart climbed thankfully into his boat, and shouted the command "Off." His voice was answered by a clear and sweet bugle call. . . .

The rowers jumped out, taking their oars with them ; as they left in undignified haste, a little tendril of smoke curled up from the thatch of all but a few boats. There was a great burst of flame and a shattering noise, and a murderous fire began to pour in upon the English from every side.

Ladies jumped from the boats and stood breast high in the river, looking for shelter under the prows ; the wounded rolled themselves out and drowned, or died miserably under the flaming thatch ; the men answered aimlessly with what guns they had, or set their shoulders against such boats as were not yet alight, and tried to push them off. But they would not budge ; they were not intended to budge ; they had been run hard up into the shallows, and their keels were fast in the sand.

And now the fire slackened, as there became fewer targets to shoot at ; and the cavalry, drawn swords between their teeth, pistols in hand, went

plunging into the river. After them came the sepoys, following their lead as always, sheep of the "Sheeps' Mutiny." "Some were stabbed with bayonets," runs the evidence of two half-caste women, Mrs. Bradshaw and Mrs. Setts, "others cut down. Little infants were torn in pieces. We saw it ; we did ; and tell you only what we saw. Other children were stabbed and thrown into the river. The schoolgirls were burnt to death. I saw their clothes and hair catch fire. In the water, a few paces off, by the next boat, we saw the youngest daughter of Colonel Williams. A sepoy was going to kill her with his bayonet. She said, 'My father was always good to sepoys.' He turned away, and just then a villager struck her on the head with his club, and she fell into the water."

By now everything was over, so far as escape was concerned. Those men who could swim struck out across the river. Just three boats had been floated off, and of these two had drifted straight to the other bank, into the jaws of the battery which waited there, and were shot to pieces. But the third went sluggishly into the main channel, and grounded on a sandbank a little further down-stream. Mowbray-Thomson swam out to it, and one or two others with him ; and, by a curious chance, it contained most of

the leading figures of the siege—Vibart, and Captain Moore, and Delafosse ; Blenman, the gallant half-caste spy ; Ashe, and Whiting, and Glenville, and Burncy. It was to have a strange career before the mutineers captured it, and four of its crew were to survive.

That massacre in the river had not lasted very long. The Nana Sahib, pacing recklessly before his tent a mile away—(he who never walked a step on ordinary days)—received a message that the killing was on. He kept the messenger a while and then sent him back, saying that the women and children were to be spared. So Tantia Topee had the “Cease Fire” blown ; and they dragged out the survivors, one hundred and twenty-five women and children. Any men they found were put to the sword at once.

Up from the river, where they had hidden under the charred woodwork of boats, or stood helplessly in four feet of water while death somehow passed them by, these poor souls were driven like sheep ; and like sheep they huddled together all morning, ringed about with sentries under the pitiless sun. A little Ganges water was given them from a goat skin ; and at midday they were marched back by the way they had come that same morning.

It is the most tragic of all things that happened in Cawnpore—that procession, like a procession of reprieved souls suddenly condemned to go back into hell again. It was a cold hell, with all the fiery torments gone, and only despair left. They went up that ravine, which a few hours before had seemed like the entrance to happiness ; they crossed the plain, and passed their silent ruin of an entrenchment, which they had thought never to see again. . . .

The irony was complete enough ; but this was no high tragedy. It was like the tragedy of Euripides' *Trojan Women*, presenting an incomparably sordid appearance. The chief actors were repellent to look at ; wet and barefoot and streaked with mud, their dresses torn and blood-stained, they dragged themselves along into the Nana's presence.

He looked them over with all the fine airs of a conqueror, and ordered them to be confined in the Sevada House, lately inhabited by a sepoy regiment, whose habits were not cleanly. The place had been roughly cleared for them, and a guard from the 6th N.I. was set over them. They were soon to be moved from that into a place called the Beebee-ghar, a place whose name can never quite be forgotten in India.

§

That one boat which had got away, and had grounded on a sandbank, was exposed for some time to a fire from both banks. Many a life was lost trying to push it off—Captain Moore, shot through the heart, Ashe, Bolton, Burney, Glenville, and others ; but at last it came away and, alternately grounding and drifting, floated slowly down-stream ; they had no oars to manage it with, and had to make shift with some broken pieces of wood.

For that whole day they had no food, and nothing but river water to drink : the wounded lay entangled with the dead at the bottom of the boat, and had to endure these dreadful companions until there was opportunity to extricate them and dump them overboard.

All day they were pursued with intermittent gunfire, and with nightfall they had another kind of danger to face. A burning boat was sent after them, which they only just avoided ; and the sepoys shot at their thatch with arrows tipped with glowing charcoal, and they managed to deal with these too. Morning found them alone on the river, and for a while they thought that the pursuit was over.

They came across some natives bathing, and

when they asked them for aid were grimly informed that a local potentate, whose estates lay a little further down-stream, had engaged that they should not escape. At this Whiting pencilled a few lines on a scrap of paper, put them in a bottle that he had by him, and pushed it out into the river : to his mind the jaws of the trap had closed at last.

But the morning passed, and there was no sign of attack from the river's bank. At two in the afternoon they came in sight of a village called Nuzzufguhr. Its little landing-place was crowded with natives, who poured bullets into them out of their ancient matchlocks, killing two and wounding five : and they were only saved from further slaughter by a torrent of rain, which blotted them from the sight of their tormentors, and kept up until they had drifted out of reach.

At six in the evening a boatload of sepoys appeared, rowing up fast : it had almost reached them when it ran into a sandbank. And then the English did a magnificent thing. Sick, famished and miserable as they were, some eighteen or twenty of them leaped from their boat, splashed through the intervening shallows, and attacked the sepoys, who numbered at least sixty. " Few of their number," wrote Mowbray-

Thomson, who was one of the attackers, "escaped to tell the story." It is not the anger, or the wealth, or the power of England, but incidents like this which show how the mutiny did not succeed in 1857.

The wind came up that night and carried that boatload of men and women through the darkness, as they thought perhaps to deliverance : but morning found them in a hopeless predicament. The first streaks of light showed them, not a broad river, but a backwater into which they had somehow been carried. Their pursuers had followed them steadily all night, and now, peering through the rushes, had them at last at their mercy. Once again a hail of bullets ; and Vibart, shot through both arms, and helpless at the bottom of the boat, issued his last orders—“Attack !”

Mowbray-Thomson and Delafosse, with a sergeant and eleven rank and file, scrambled out, splashed up the reedy bank, and made desperately into the heart of their attackers. They fought their way through, turned, and came back : but the boat had gone ! For a while they fought their way backwards along the bank, hoping for a glimpse of it : but they never saw it or their companions again.

Not knowing where they were, these fourteen

survivors, bareheaded and barefooted, with the sun shining fiercely down on them, separated twenty paces from one another and loaded and fired, loaded and fired, for three terrible miles. At last their way was blocked by a large force which appeared suddenly in front of them ; behind were their attackers of the early morning ; on the opposite bank there were men who waited, to shoot them under if they tried to swim the river. There was no way out, except to take death standing on their feet : when they saw, a little way back from the river, a tiny Hindu temple, and made a dash for it, and won safely inside.

Mowbray-Thomson placed four men in a crouching position in the low doorway, with their bayonets so placed as to form a *cheval de frise* ; and the first native attack was so violent that its leaders were pushed on to the bayonets, where their bodies formed a living barricade against their own comrades. Over this the English fired in comparative security with the little ammunition that was left them.

The natives drew back, and their commander, whose brother's body was still impaled in the temple doorway, sent an express message back to the Nana—"The Nazarenes are still invincible." The Nazarenes, meanwhile, had hunted in the

temple's interior, and found a little foul water in a hole beneath the altar, which gave them at least some temporary relief.

Then an attempt was made to burn them out : for the temple was circular, and there was neither window nor loophole in its walls, so that, by creeping round from the back, you could lay faggots almost up to the doorway itself. But a wind blew the smoke away : and the English, gazing through it, saw their aggressors coming up with bags of gunpowder. It was no use to wait for *that*. They gathered themselves together and rushed out.

The burning faggots scorched their feet, but they had no time to think of that : they fired one volley and "ran amuck with the bayonet." Few sepoys could stand a direct charge, and that is how seven of the fourteen reached the river alive and plunged in. Three were shot almost as soon as they rose to the surface, but the other four, alternately swimming and floating, somehow outdistanced their pursuers : a solitary trooper was the last they saw of them.

These four were Lieutenants Mowbray-Thomson and Delafosse and Privates Murphy and Sullivan. Their escape was a little miraculous. They even managed to avoid the alligators—"the natives afterwards said that it was a miracle

that we had escaped their bottle-nosed brethren who feed on them."

For six miles they swam, without a moment's intermission : and then suddenly—rescue. A few natives calling from the river bank " Sahib, sahib, we are friends." Weary beyond resistance, the four allowed themselves to be dragged out of the water and supported to the nearest village.

Thomson wore a flannel shirt ; Delafosse a piece of cloth around his loins ; Murphy and Sullivan, keeping their place to the end, had nothing on at all. But they were received as honoured guests by a certain Oudh chief, the Maharajah Diribijah Singh, whose tact and courtesy never failed him for a moment. This kindly old man healed and fed and protected them, and, three weeks later, passed them over to the first European troops who came hurrying by from Allahabad on their way to revenge Cawnpore.

These four were the only survivors.

§

Their wretched companions, whom they had left behind in the boat when they made their sortie, were brought captive alongside the wharf at Cawnpore on June 30. From Bithoor the

Nana Sahib sent his orders ; let the men be shot and the women confined in the Beebee-ghar.

But one lady would not be separated from her husband ; she stood among the men with her child and refused to be dragged out ; so the sepoys said that if she desired death so much she could have it. Captain Seppings, with one arm in a sling, read out loud from the Book of Common Prayer ; the Englishmen shook hands all round ; and the sepoys fired. Those who did not die at the first volley were put out of their misery with swords.

That same evening the Nana Sahib was enthroned as Peshwa : the sacred marks were made upon his forehead, a royal salute of twenty-one guns was fired, and there was a great deal of pomp and ceremony, and some attempts at illumination in the city, and much drunkenness.

§

Two separate batches of captives were now in the Beebee-ghar, that dark little house which a European officer had built for his native mistress. On July 10 a third little company was sent there. These were the women survivors of Fatehgarh.

Fatehgarh was a station adjoining the city of Furruckabad, about eighty miles up-stream from

Cawnpore. It was commanded by a Colonel Simpson and garrisoned by the 10th Native Infantry, and its fate is an example of what credulity could do in this year of mutiny. For Colonel Simpson in the face of bad news from Meerut and Delhi and dark rumours everywhere, refused to believe that his sepoys could be unfaithful to *him*. He loved them ; he worshipped them ; he could swear to their loyalty ; and thus swearing dug his own grave, which happened also to be the grave of one hundred and eighty others who had the misfortune to believe in him.

These sepoys of the 10th were as unlikely a crew as any in the Bengal army, and if they loved their colonel at all, loved him because he pampered them beyond reason. Mr. Probyn, the District Magistrate, saw through them easily enough and decided, against the colonel's protestations, to evacuate Fatehgarh while evacuation was still possible, and to take as many of its English inhabitants as he could persuade to go along with him.

At midnight, therefore, between June 3 and 4, a company of one hundred Europeans started down the river in a fleet of twelve boats, amply provisioned and furnished. Colonel Simpson came down to the river with them, to give them

the last benefits of his disapproval, and watched them depart in great disgust.

They were headed for the estate of one Hurdeo Bux, an honourable nobleman who had offered to put them up for as long as was necessary. They were fired at occasionally as they went down to the river, for the country people in this district were mostly hostile to the English, and it was scarcely midday of June 4 before they were joined by some English officers of the 10th, announcing that the regiment had already mutinied in Fatehgarh. Probyn thanked his gods that he had got away in time and pushed on as fast as he could : on the morning of June 5 they had arrived at Hurdeo Bux's fort at Durrumpore. Here they decided to split up, part of them going into the fort with Probyn, and the rest—nineteen men, twenty-three women, and twenty-six children—heading for Cawnpore in the three roomiest boats.

These last arrived at their destination on June 9, their boat grounding gently on a sandbank not far above the suburb of Nawab-gunj, where the Treasury had been sacked five days before : all they could hear now was an insistent cannonade, thundering up from the south. In their bewilderment they sent a messenger ashore to ask permission for them to proceed on their way,

and their answer came back in the form of a horde of mutineers, who dragged them off to the Nana Sahib.

Their threats were so vigorous that the Nana was almost persuaded to mercy ; for these were the early days of the siege and he was not yet accustomed to bloodshed. But his brother began whispering in his ear, and after a little while he nodded and gave an order. The ladies and little ones were made to sit on the ground, the gentlemen, their hands tied behind their backs, formed a second rank. Then the 2nd Cavalry troopers were turned loose upon them with drawn sabres.

Somehow one has no words for these things.

Meanwhile at Fatehgarh Simpson was playing his tragedy out. On June 4, the day after Probyn's departure, £20,000 of government silver was removed from the Treasury to the Fort. This was something the sepoys could not allow—their colonel was actually mistrusting them : so they surrounded the silver carts and demanded that the money be taken back to their quarters—it would be a lot safer, they said, with the Company's most loyal servants, the irreproachable sepoys of the 10th Regiment.

The colonel would give these loyal servants his love, but not his silver : and he was very

quickly on the scene with his adjutant, and very loud in his remonstrations. Whereupon the sepoys pushed the two officers up against a wall and circled them with bayonets until the money was safely in their own lines. Then they demanded an advance of two months' pay, six months' extra allowances, and an assurance that the treasure should henceforth be kept in their parade ground. With a bayonet six inches from his chest, the colonel had no choice but to agree.

That evening he harangued them for their disgraceful conduct, but laid most of the blame on the recruits, and promised that he would forgive and forget. And so the little affair was smoothed over "in terms of contemptuous acquiescence on the one side and doting credulity on the other."

Four days later Probyn plucked up his courage, and came back to Fatchgath. He brought with him two subalterns of the 10th whom Simpson immediately arrested for desertion, though they assured him that they had been driven away by the fire of their own companies.

The colonel's delusion had now taken complete hold of him. He told Probyn that his services as magistrate were no longer required as the district was now under martial law; and Probyn, only too glad to shake the dust of the doomed station from his feet, made all haste to

Durrumpore, where he told his companions that the 10th could no longer be kept from mutiny.

Hard on his heels there came a messenger. Colonel Simpson begged his compatriots in Durrumpore to return : there were at least one hundred and fifty men of the 10th, so the colonel assured them, who could be absolutely relied upon, and if the worst came to the worst these men would help them fight their way down to Allahabad.

Probyn argued fiercely, but Simpson's insane message was very tempting. The English compared their present discomfort in the fort—which was indeed somewhat cheerless and narrow—with all the luxuries of their homes in Fatehgarh : and packed themselves into their boats, and left. Probyn managed to persuade exactly one civilian to remain with him and his family, and that civilian was freshly arrived from the bloody province of Rohilkhand, and knew what sepoys could be like.

So Fatehgarh received its victims. On June 16 the colonel, self-appointed military ruler of the district, tried to carry out a capital sentence which had been imposed some time before by the civil power. But his sepoys informed him that they had no wish to see a criminal executed : and the criminal was not executed.

And then the mutineers from Setapore drew near to Fatehgarh : they were fresh from murder, and they sent a messenger in advance of them, demanding the death of every officer in the 10th. "Come," was the answer. "We have sworn not to do such a thing, but our oaths do not bind you." The 10th contented themselves with a bloodless mutiny, during which they sacked the treasure chest, and drove the Europeans into the fort. As for Simpson's boasted hundred and fifty loyal men, just one of them went into the fort with him. Angry and disillusioned, he watched the other regiment come in from Setapore, and looked hopelessly at his decayed ramparts.

At first the Setapore mutineers were men with a grievance—the treasure chest was empty, and they felt that they had had a long march for nothing ; so they began to kill every man of the 10th they could lay their hands on. After that the two regiments patched up their differences—probably with a division of the silver ; the 10th forgot their oaths ; and there was a combined attack on the fort.

Whatever his shortcomings, Colonel Simpson was no coward. For ten days he directed the defence of twenty acres of decayed earthwork, fighting with astonishing bravery and a fierce

hatred for the sepoys who had betrayed his trust and his kindness. But at last he and his men were forced to take to their boats "encumbered with thrice their number of women, children, and invalids."

The river was low, the pursuit relentless. The boats grounded and were pushed off and grounded again. But at last the remnants of the expedition came to ground at Nawab-gunj ; and the men were killed, and the women taken off to swell those poor souls already herded into the Beebee-ghar.

That was July 10. Before the middle of July there came news that Henry Havelock was advancing from Allahabad ; and the Nana Sahib began to see the writing on the wall ; and something was done in the Beebee-ghar which makes its name the most hideous of any in the records of this mutiny.

IX

DELHI REVISITED

WHILE they were still alive in Cawnpore they had spoken hopefully of the fall of Delhi ; in Lucknow they looked for the same good fortune ; in the Punjab, that vast province where John Lawrence was half a monarch, and in Rajputana, and in Agra, the beautiful city of kings, and in Calcutta itself there was the same tale to be heard—Delhi must be taken.

Indeed, if Delhi had fallen in the early days there would perhaps have been no story of Cawnpore and no story of Lucknow.

But it was easier to talk of driving the sepoys out of their stronghold than it was to drive them. For just as Delhi fell because there was no European army to hold it, so when it came to capturing it again for England the same difficulty arose. There were not enough men and not enough guns.

General the Honourable A. Anson, commander-in-chief of the Bengal army, suddenly

found himself, on May 12, 1857, in a position which no general on earth would envy him. There was no telegraph line to Simla, the hill station where Anson was taking his ease ; a messenger came up by horseback from Amballa, saying that two strange, incoherent telegrams had been received from Delhi before the wires were cut, which made it seem that the Meerut sepoys had revolted ; an hour later a second messenger confirmed this bad news.

At that time Anson had three English regiments on the slopes of the Himalayas—the 75th Foot, and the 1st and 2nd Bengal Fusiliers. Anson told the 75th to make for the plains at once, and warned the two others that they must be ready to follow at a moment's notice.

He sent orders for the Gurkha battalion at Dehra Dun and the sappers and miners at Roorkhee to proceed to Meerut ; on May 14 he went galloping down the Simla bridle-path, headed for the plains and Amballa. As he went, he meditated on the problem of how to create a working army out of practically nothing.

On May 16 his force was gathered in Amballa. Of Europeans he had—two troops of horse artillery, Her Majesty's 9th Lancers, Her

Majesty's 75th Foot, and the 1st and 2nd Bengal Fusiliers, all at peace-time strength which is not strength at all. His first great problem was artillery. For between Amballa and Meerut there were three horse artillery batteries, one horsed field battery, and two eighteen-pounders. Delhi was his natural arsenal, and that was closed to him ; he would have to send to Phillaur, an arsenal intended for troops moving northwards into Afghanistan ; but you cannot make a siege without a siege train, so to Phillaur his messenger went, and that was one reason for delay.

Then he had no proper transport. It was the custom for European troops to make use of moving bazaars of merchants for their supplies, and of local contractors for their carts, wagons, and pack animals. With the country hostile or scared it was difficult to get what you wanted, particularly when the native cavalry whom you would naturally use to scour the neighbourhood for food and "carriage" were extremely shaky in their loyalty.

And no sooner had he got to Amballa than he was deluged with telegrams, all saying the same thing. Capture Delhi—capture Delhi—capture Delhi ; he was weary with reading them. Naturally anybody but a fool would know that Delhi must not be left unattacked for an hour

longer than was necessary ; but what did Lawrence, the fierce and over-insistent, care or what did Colvin or Canning know about local conditions ?

Anson was a driven man : but he did not lose his head or his temper : and on May 17, five days after the news had surprised him in Simla, his first troops had left for Karnal, the nearest station on the road into Delhi.

Their objective was to establish some communication with Hewitt, still holding a mysterious silence in Meerut. And for this purpose Anson selected one man, a man whose name has been both praised and execrated for his work in the year 1857. His name was Lieutenant Hodson of the 1st Fusiliers, and his job was to raise an irregular squadron of cavalry and keep the road open between Karnal and Meerut.

Another man might have told himself that the job was almost impossible—as indeed it was—and gone into it with his eyes shut and his teeth clenched, and been killed on the way. But not Hodson. He was a strange person. He had made a name for himself in the Sikh Wars, when England had captured the Punjab ; he had shown splendid courage and great ability ; but somehow when the war was over, and the English

were faced with pacifying and governing a great new Province, there was no room for him. He behaved violently towards his own men, and was arrogant, hot-tempered and unjust. They sent him back to comparative inactivity and disgrace in Amballa.

Now he took his chance. He started from Karnal at nine o'clock one evening ; rode the seventy-six miles into Meerut before the break of day ; delivered his dispatches to Brigadier Archdale Wilson, breakfasted, bathed, slept two hours ; and rode back to Karnal, fighting for his life a whole thirty miles of the way.

After that he was commissioned to raise an irregular cavalry regiment, and lived to be known as Hodson of Hodson's Horse, the man who slaughtered the King's sons after the fall of Delhi.

But he had done this particular piece of work with great dash ; and now Wilson, whom Hewitt had kept idle in Meerut, was given his chance to strike a blow at Delhi. With Anson on the move, Hewitt had to grant him some of his precious men.

On May 26 the last troops left Amballa for Karnal. On May 27 Anson died of a violent attack of cholera ; he died whispering a few

words to Barnard, his second-in-command and successor, " You know how anxious I was to do my duty . . . God bless you . . . Good-bye." His ride down from Simla, the worry of finding troops and transport and artillery, the knowledge that the whole of Northern India looked to him for action, and more decisive action than it was in his power to take—all these things left him an easy prey to the cholera when it came. His nerves had been worn ragged : " you know how anxious I was . . ." are the words of a man who realises that he will be misunderstood : and he was misunderstood.

For some time afterwards it was the fashion to laugh at him : they used to think of those violent messages out of the Punjab, and say that he died " of an attack of John Lawrence." Later opinion has entirely justified him in everything that he did.

Barnard left Karnal on the same day, and simultaneously Archdale Wilson moved out of Meerut with a small force, with the idea of joining Barnard at some point outside Delhi. He could not effect this junction until he had won two splendid victories over vastly superior forces, and on two successive days at that : it was June 7 before he marched into Barnard's camp at Baghpur.

He found it seething with impatience, for fresh tales of massacre had drifted through from Delhi, and even the sick in the hospital tents were begging for a chance to march on with the rest. They were on the road which the refugees had travelled nearly a month back ; and you could still find bits of clothing which had been lost on that dreadful journey ; and there were suspicious characters who, faced with certain hanging whatever they said, would boast of committing the most frightful atrocities on European women. Odd rumours were flying about, without much foundation to them—in this village or that a pair of children's boots had been found, and the feet were still in them, hacked off from the ankles : or some native would swear to wholesale violations of Englishwomen in the Delhi bazaars. Barnard's men had burned a village here and there, and hanged some unfortunates : but when Wilson joined them all they wanted was to get on to Delhi.

Scouts had brought in the intelligence that a force of sepoys was strongly entrenched at Badlika-Serai, some six miles out of Delhi. And in the early hours of June 8 Barnard and Wilson made their attack. It was a difficult position to capture—a group of noblemen's houses, strung together on the crest of a hill, their gardens

making an excellent entrenchment. But the English carried the place at the bayonet's point, with heavy loss, and pushed straight on for Delhi.

A short march brought them within sight of their objective—the old cantonments, now charred and black in the sunlight, and above them the Ridge.

You must imagine the Ridge as a sort of spear, lunging right into Delhi. It was a rocky hill, two miles long, and running its narrow length north and south. From the north, where Barnard and Wilson now stood, the road forked, one branch running straight across the cantonments and up the Ridge, and so to the Flagstaff Tower half-way along ; the other turning to the right, and making a roundabout way into Delhi through a garden suburb known as Sabzi Mandi, "the Green Suburb."

It was decided that Barnard should go straight ahead, and fight his way along the Ridge to the Flagstaff Tower, at whose base they could just see three sepoy batteries. Wilson was to get through Sabzi Mandi and come out at the other end of the Ridge—the spear's head, which overlooked the city walls scarcely twelve hundred yards away. He was then to turn and come back along the Ridge, meeting Barnard half-way, and

literally squeezing the sepoys there off the hill, who would have no choice but to run for Delhi while the going was good.

The scheme was completely successful. Barnard and Brigadier Graves with him, and it must have been a sorry experience for the man to cross his old parade ground, and the burned shells of his officers' bungalows, and his sepoy's deserted lines. . . .

An adroit flanking movement cleared the Ridge as far as the Flagstaff Tower ; a fierce engagement drove the sepoys from that position and silenced their guns ; and Barnard and his men swept on southward.

Meanwhile Wilson, after passing through a hot fire from the houses and orchards of the Sabzi Mandi, reached his first objective—a large stone building called Hindu Rao's House which lay on the southward end of the Ridge and was a key position for any defence against attacks from Delhi. He consolidated that point and went back to meet Barnard, and together they had the Union Jack run up on the Flagstaff Tower ; and the old King saw it from his palace and woke up from a curious dream.

It had been all parades and enthusiasm and feasting ; his poor old brain had been filled with illusions of royalty and he had forgotten all about

the English who had fled before his armies and were a broken people.

Now they had come back again.

§

After burning the sepoy lines in their enthusiasm—a foolish thing to do, since it deprived them of the only habitable buildings in the cantonment—the English set to work to consolidate the Ridge. Even now you can see the places they fortified—the Pathan Mosque, the Observatory, the Flagstaff Tower, and Hindu Rao's House with its gates. Just below this house, at a point nearest the city, Barnard planted his Right Battery, with about half a mile of the northward walls to play upon. A little way further back he put a strong mortar battery ; then came the Centre Battery, spread fanwise before Hindu Rao's House ; and three hundred yards above it was the heavy Left Battery, its grim howitzers under the shadow of the Observatory walls.

The position, in fact, was an extremely strong one, except for two places. The Sabzi Mandi, whose lanes had housed the Delhi vegetable market in times of peace, was still occupied by mutineers ; the Ridge came between it and the

city, and it was therefore a perpetual menace to Barnard's rear. And on the opposite side of the Ridge, where the ground ran level to the River Jumna, lay Sir Thomas Metcalfe's gutted country house, standing in a spacious park. This, too, was occupied by mutineers in the first days.

And, of course, all the ground which lay between the Ridge's southward tip and the north walls of Delhi was filled with gardens and buildings, and offered excellent cover for the sepoys right up to their own walls.

As for these Delhi walls, they were at least seven miles in circumference, with seven bastioned gates, and thirty bastions, pierced and embrasured ; they were protected for half their height by a steep glacis, and in front of them was a deep ditch. They had been overhauled by British engineers and were in very decent repair while their defensive artillery was plentiful, perhaps as much as fourteen pieces to a bastion.

It was altogether too difficult a proposition for Barnard's artillery to tackle. He had twenty-two field-guns with him, principally nine-pounders, and the light siege train which had come from Phillaur, composed of eight eighteen-pounders, four eight-inch howitzers, four eight-inch mortars, and twelve five-and-a-half-inch

mortars : with this equipment he was somehow expected to batter Delhi into a quick submission.

His force, which had lost fifty-three killed and one hundred and thirty wounded fighting its way on to the Ridge, received a welcome addition on July 9, an addition which was somewhat prophetic. Major Daly came in from the Punjab with three troops of horse and six companies of foot ; he had marched nearly six hundred miles in twenty-seven days, pretty nearly a miracle in that country and at that time of year. The Punjab supplied Delhi's real conquerors, as it turned out : and here was the first of them, dead on time and apparently as fresh as when he had started.

Barnard's force now numbered some two thousand, three hundred men—enough to hold the Ridge, for two attacks upon Hindu Rao's House, and one surprise attack on the Flagstaff Tower from Metcalfe's House which lay below it, were turned back with some ease. On these occasions Major Daly's Ghurkas, the little hillmen from the secret Kingdom of Nepal, behaved with astonishing gallantry, and refused all offers to throw in their lot with the mutineers.

And now Barnard, who was afterwards to die very much the same death as Ansón, began to see what his old commander's difficulties had been.

There was the old cry to capture Delhi, not only from Calcutta and the Punjab, but from his own men who should have known better now that they were actually on the spot.

And yet Delhi could not even be invested. Its eastward length was washed by the broad Jumna, and to the south and west men could come in and go out as they pleased : only along its northward expanse of wall, where the Kashmir Gate frowned back at the Ridge, could the English make any trouble at all. But there it lay, its rose-red palace glowing with a sinister beauty, and seeming to throw out that challenge of

“Get thee back, my soul is too much charg’d with blood
of thine already,”

which no fighting man has ever been able to resist.

So Barnard yielded. The only hope was to capture the place with a sudden surprise attack, and he entrusted the planning of it to a young engineer called Wilberforce Greathed, his own staff being altogether too inefficient to draw up a scheme on their own. The attack was planned for the dawn of June 13 ; gunpowder parties were to go out under cover of darkness and blow up the Kashmir and Kabul Gates ; while every man on the Ridge, outposts and all, was to form up in

an assault column, ready to dash into the city as soon as the gunpowder had breached its walls.

But Greathed was too young to realise that every plan must be " implemented " with minute instructions. So it happened that Brigadier Graves, who was in charge of the outposts and pickets on the night of June 12, had never heard of the plan at all.

It was not far from daybreak, and the powder parties were ready to set out. A messenger was sent to Graves, telling him to clear the Ridge of men and march them off to some mysterious rallying-place. Graves could make neither head nor tail of the order, and since it was not written but oral he made off for Headquarters to have it confirmed by the general.

Confronted with Graves' bewilderment, Barnard felt all his old doubts returning. He explained the order and asked the Brigadier what he thought of it ; whereupon Graves replied that they might very easily take the city by surprise, but that they could never hold it afterwards. Faced with at least three times their own numbers, they would lose heavily forcing their way in, for sepoys are at their best behind walls : and, once in, there was an infuriated populace to consider. Graves, who knew his Delhi if any man did, looked Barnard hard in the eyes and

said that he thought the plan doomed to failure : so Barnard countermanded the attack.

There was trouble after that. All the junior officers and elderly hot-heads on the Ridge held Graves responsible, and there was a good deal of talk about pistolling him then and there. They should have blamed their own staff-work which kept the one man who knew the city defences ignorant until the last minute ; but that was how things went in the early days of the mutiny.

Graves, who suffered thereafter for having had the courage of his opinions, was entirely right. The attack might have been a failure : more probably it would have been a partial success—the English would have got into a city with every house and lane a death-trap, and died there to a man. Either event would have been disastrous to their country's fortunes in Northern India.

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It was now the middle of June. Neill was still busy fighting cholera and insurrection in Allahabad ; Nicholson's Movable Column had not yet left the confines of the Punjab ; this little force outside Delhi was the only active English army in the field—two thousand men on a rocky

hill, doomed to stand a virtual siege through July and August.

Meanwhile in Lucknow they were about to endure one of the most memorable sieges in the history of British India.

X

LUCKNOW

THE drama which was to be played in Lucknow during the year 1857 had a long and complicated prologue.

Early connections of the English with the State of Oudh were both obscure and disreputable. They had once been the Nawab's *military protectors*, which is another way of saying "hired bullies," swaggering about the streets of Lucknow like so many Bobadils. As the Nawabs grew weaker and the English stronger the latter took over the political government and began to present a sly but somewhat more respectable face to the world. But they left the State's internal administration to its native rulers—which meant that, behind the protection of English bayonets, a thoroughly decadent race of princes did exactly what it pleased.

An extravagant government means a poor and suffering people : the Nawabs' elephants, their retinue of useless attendants, their parasites and dancing girls and feasts and grand displays, were

all paid for out of taxes. If you overtax a land it becomes bankrupt, and when you have bankrupted it you wring money out of it, and then it becomes a desert. This was the procedure in Oudh as the eighteenth century drew to a close. The Nawabs revelled, the people starved, the English smirked and bowed and took their cut.

But in 1800 Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General—who was by way of being a despot—decided to step in. He made the reigning Nawab bind himself to obey the counsels of the East India Company and its officers, and sketched out a course of administration which might bring some sort of prosperity back in due time.

But the years passed, and Nawabs and Governors-General appeared and disappeared, and Oudh got no better. All that the reigning family ever did was to remain friendly with their English overseers : finding money and cattle and grain for them in war-time and receiving titles in exchange, including the title of King. There were ways, so their new Majesties discovered, of getting away with almost anything—bribery, extortion, murder in broad daylight, foolish parasites in high office, travesties of law and justice. Wellesley's old treaty gave them some measure of British military protection : for the rest, they had a disarming way with them.

All good times come to an end. The Kings of Lucknow found that their East India Company officers were no longer very easy to manage. The English policy of playing the King of Oudh against his nominal overlord the Mogul in Delhi had lost its meaning ; for the English were in power and they proposed at last to let their right hand know exactly what their left hand was doing. There was to be no more bowing and scraping to an effete Mogul in Delhi, no more winking at the excesses of an equally effete King in Lucknow. When Lord Dalhousie sent Colonel James Outram to the Residency in the latter city, with orders to report upon the existing state of the kingdom, Outram was obliged to say that “ extreme measures ” were necessary. That was in 1854.

Dalhousie suggested that the King should be “ territorial sovereign ” without any revenue : his Government would take that in the name of the East India Company. A king without revenue is not a king, as Dalhousie very well knew ; and everybody acquainted with the Governor-General’s policy of annexing whatever territory he could lay his hands on was quite aware of his real intentions. The English government—through its convenient mouthpiece, the Court of Directors of the East India Company—

decided not to mince matters. The King was to abdicate, and his country was to become a British dominion.

In January, 1856, Colonel Outram asked for an audience with His Majesty, King Wajid Ali : and the King, who knew what was coming, put him off until February 4. When he did receive him, he received him with tears and protestations and refused to sign a treaty of abdication. Treaties are between equals, he said, and he was no longer an equal : he took off his turban, the symbol of his rank and honour, and laid it at Outram's feet. Outram had always been a friend to the native princes ; embarrassed, unhappy, and more than a little disgusted, he told the King that he must consider himself dethroned.

The common people accepted their new rulers quietly ; but the annexation had created a very bad impression. It was thought that England had profited by the transaction—which she had not—and that all her talk of humanity and the rights of the poor was so much hypocrisy. Nor did Oudh seem any healthier as a consequence. It was filled with the King's disbanded army and the hangers-on at his disbanded court ; the territorial aristocracy had lost a good part of its estates ; the middle classes distrusted all change

without compensation : and into the midst of this unrest came the story of the greased cartridges.

When Sir Henry Lawrence arrived, on March 20, 1857, to take up his residence in Lucknow as Chief Commissioner, the new Province was ripe for insurrection. Lawrence was a sick man : but he was the only possible man for the job. He was taciturn, gentle, courteous, and honest ; he understood the people he had to deal with ; he was neither afraid of them nor contemptuous of them ; he did not bluster and he did not wheedle. If the Province was sick, here was the best doctor for it—the man who had been knighted for his services in the Punjab, and who had made friends and allies of half the princes in Rajputana.

But the Province was sick to death, and beyond recovery. Lawrence could and did make friends with the nobles, merchants, and peasantry ; but the army was in a hopeless state. For fifteen years he had warned his Government about the dangers of a large mercenary force, such as the Bengal army ; he had said that discipline was bad, and that the sepoy would never pull himself together until he was given more authority and more opportunity.

But his warnings had not been noticed, and

now he was to see them justified. On May 1 he wrote to the Governor-General, remarking on "a pretty general dissatisfaction in the army ; particularly with the General Service Enlistment Oath, which would bind its takers to serve overseas." "Until we treat Natives," he said, "and particularly Native soldiers, as having much the same feelings, the same perceptions of ability and imbecility as ourselves, we shall never be safe."

Clods of earth were thrown at him in the streets : one regiment, the 48th N.I., consistently refused to salute any but its own officers : and on May 2 the 7th Oudh Irregulars, stationed seven miles from Lucknow, would now accept its cartridges. Some native officers laid information against the regiment, saying that it was in a state of extreme disloyalty ; whereupon it was immediately disarmed, and its ringleaders were secured and executed.

And so the old story begins once more. Lawrence, who knew that the sepoys' wrongs were not fancied, constantly visited them in their hospitals and over-crowded lines : and on May 12 he held a Durbar to reward loyal native officers and soldiers for the information they had given him a few days previously. He told the assembled troops, in his careful Hindustani, of "the com-

munity of danger and community of glory" between the sepoys and their English officers.

Let them remember how Muhammadans had persecuted Hindus, and Hindus Muhammadans ; let them consider how the English government had offered toleration to all ; let them hesitate before they undid the good that one hundred years of impartial rule had bestowed upon them.

But the Durbar, for all its pomp and ceremony, its gifts and fine words, passed for nothing. On the next day Sir Henry knew that he could not afford to delay much longer, and he began to lay his plans for defence.

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The great city of Lucknow lies along the curving right bank of the River Gamti : in the year 1857 it was twenty miles in circumference, and its inhabitants numbered at least three hundred thousand. The Residency, which was Lawrence's official home in Lucknow, crested a little hill upon the river's edge, with the water on its east side, and the city stretching out below it to the north and the west and the south.

You could get a magnificent view from its terraced roof, especially in the early morning. Then the jumbled streets and crowded houses of

the poorer quarters would be lost in the haze, while directly below you a scheme of domes and minarets gleamed in the sun, and the Gamti's southward curve was lined with palaces, each a miniature town—fortified walls, courts and stone cloisters, orange trees and lemon trees and bright fountains.

Only to the north would Lucknow seem a little disappointing, for in that direction the city proper came right up to the edge of the Residency gardens, and there was little to relieve the monotony of roofs but an old Sikh fortress, called the Machi Bhawan, which raised its three-tiered mound high above the surrounding buildings.

Lawrence decided that, if it came to a siege, he would defend the Residency ; and that meanwhile he would put a garrison into the Machi Bhawan, and use the place as a depository for stores and ammunition, and as a temporary refuge for any European families who felt themselves unsafe outside in the city.

He was not content, as others in the Bengal Presidency were perforce content, to sit and wait for something to happen. He decided to take the offensive, and sent out detachments of European soldiers, with orders to keep the country open. "Time is everything," he wrote in his memorandum book. "Time, firmness, prompt-

ness, conciliation, prudence. . . . A firm and cheerful aspect must be maintained, there must be no bustle, no appearance of alarm, still less of panic ; but at the same time there must be the utmost watchfulness and promptness ; everywhere the first germ of insurrection must be put down instantly.”

So while his European soldiers kept uneasy watch along the high roads, or tried to fill the Machi Bhawan with food and arms as though it was the most ordinary procedure in the world, Lawrence telegraphed to Canning asking for plenary military authority in Oudh. “ I will not use it unnecessarily,” he said. That was on May 16, with the news of Delhi two days old, and no doubt at all in Sir Henry’s mind as to what was going to happen in Lucknow.

But when was it going to happen ? When Canning wrote “ I cannot express the satisfaction I feel in having you in Oudh ” Lawrence could not find the heart to answer him. He had no news, as he confided to his memorandum book, “ but daily alarums and hourly reports.” At last, on the evening of May 29, he sat down to write his letter. “ The taint is fast spreading. In a few weeks, if not days—unless Delhi be in the interim captured—there will be one feeling throughout the army, a feeling that our prestige

is gone, and that feeling will be more dangerous than any other." He had scarcely put the period to this sentence when a messenger came in to tell him that the mutiny he feared was set for nine o'clock the next evening.

He left the letter unfinished, and for two days had no leisure to continue it. The next evening —May 30—he and his officers took their dinner in Government House, military headquarters in the cantonments. As nine o'clock drew nearer their conversation died away—they were waiting for the evening gun, which they were told was to be the signal for the mutiny.

The clock struck the hour ; the great parade gun boomed. There followed a dead silence. Sir Henry smiled faintly and turned to the officer next him. "Your friends are late," he said. Almost immediately there was a rattle of musketry, and a voice calling in the darkness outside that the native cantonments were on fire.

Not far from Government House a building suddenly burst into flames, and Sir Henry and his staff, waiting for their horses on the steps, were sharply outlined and made an easy target. Directly opposite them the sepoy guard was lined up, and its native officer said thickly, " Shall I load ? "

The staff-officers looked at Lawrence. " Oh

yes, let them load," he said casually. The order was given at once ; the ramrods fell "with that peculiar dull sound on the leaden bullets" ; and with one slow movement every man brought his muzzle to bear directly on that little group on the steps. Not an Englishman moved ; but into that hypnotised silence came Lawrence's voice, crying out that he was off to punish the scoundrels in the cantonments. Let the guard take care that nobody came near his house, otherwise they would most certainly hang for it.

The guard stayed at Government House all night, and not a man was allowed to approach it.

The horses were brought up and Sir Henry and his staff galloped off. They found two guns and a company of Her Majesty's 32nd Foot, and sent them back to guard that three miles of level road which lay between the cantonments and the iron bridge which crossed the Gamti into Lucknow. In this way he could prevent the mutineers from starting a riot in the city, but he had not enough men to prevent them from firing the cantonment bungalows. All that night he watched the flames, standing where his Europeans had been flung across the road : at the break of day he started off for the sepoy lines.

They were empty ; every man had gone on to the cavalry cantonments at Mudkephore,

another mile away, to do a little more damage ; and Sir Henry, with a mixed force of Europeans and troopers of the 4th Native Cavalry, followed hard after them. He found them drawn up in line, and wavering already ; with a yell his native troopers galloped over to join them ; and the whole lot turned and fled. They were pursued for ten miles, and sixty prisoners were taken : and Lawrence went back to Lucknow to finish off his interrupted letter.

"Press of work stopped me here," he wrote. ". . . We are now positively better off than we were. We know our friends from our enemies. The latter beggars have no stomach for a fight, but they are capital incendiaries."

§

Lucknow was probably a signal for the rest of Oudh : from that day onwards the bad news kept on arriving. Mutiny at Setapore, Azimgarh, Fyzabad, Durreabad, Sultanpore, Salone —there seemed to be no end to it. With the knowledge that every corps in every station in the Province had probably been tainted, and that whole districts were turning daily towards a state of anarchy, Lawrence's health broke down. By June 9 he was a very sick man. He turned his

duties over to a council of five, dominated by Martin Gubbins, the Financial Commissioner, a man with a touch of genius and more than his share of courage, but a difficult colleague and a bad subordinate. Gubbins proved to be "perfectly insane on what he considers energetic, manly measures": and in order to check his wholesale disarmament policy which was rapidly alienating the few loyal sepoys that were left, Sir Henry dragged himself out of bed again. On June 12 he was back at work.

His doctor shook his head over him. His body was worn and wasted. But time was short and there was much to be seen to. Treasure was brought in from the city and stations, all the stored grain and supplies in the European shops had to be bought up: and there was the Residency, still unfortified.

It was an irregular cluster of houses and buildings, covering some sixty acres, and roughly pentagonal in shape. Its lawns and paths led gently up to the Residency House, a lofty three-storied building, with a magnificent portico and wide circling verandahs. It was very like a pleasant island, set about with a sea of mosques and huts and palaces: and it was by no means an easy position to fortify.

The walls of all the outer buildings were

woven together with an irregular line of breast-works, ditches were excavated, slopes scarped, stakes and palisades fixed, ramparts built. Down came the "rare and lofty" trees ; the lawns were torn and scarred ; the flower-beds buried under piles of shot.

On the north side of this labyrinthine entrenchment they erected a strong battery of heavy guns which they afterwards called the Redan ; and on the south, where a public highway ran close beneath the garden walls, they put up the Cawnpore Battery.

Then they started demolishing all the surrounding buildings—wall after wall came down in frantic haste, nobleman's palace and coolie's hut alike. Sir Henry, who made almost a fetish of honesty, came behind with an appraiser so that he could afterwards compensate the owners for all the damage he was doing them. As for the mosques—"spare the holy places," he said, and they were spared, repaying these extremes of piety with a devastating fire from the moment that the siege began.

They were in the middle of this work when Wheeler sent in his message for help. Lawrence was obliged to refuse, against his own inclinations and over the protest of Martin Gubbins, "the only malcontent in the garrison." But the

few men he could spare would certainly have been cut to pieces before they had gone three miles : and he was too old a hand to care for useless heroics.

There was still just the shadow of hope. Havelock was known to be marching up from Allahabad, and, as Sir Henry wrote, "if all go well *quickly* at Delhi; and still more if Cawnpore hold out, I doubt that we shall be besieged." But Barnard's men were barely holding their own on the Ridge at Delhi, while Cawnpore surrendered on the 27th. Two days later it was reported in Lucknow that the enemy was mustering in great numbers at Chinhat, a few miles across the river. There were nine regiments of infantry, so the scouts reported, one regiment of cavalry and twelve guns.

" What stuff," said Martin Gubbins when this news was brought to him : and " What stuff," repeated the whole garrison, infected by his mania for what he called "*a forward movement.*" Even Lawrence himself, who had no reason to trust his Financial Commissioner's opinions, thought that his scouts must have overestimated the enemy's numbers. He did not know that Cawnpore had fallen, of course ; otherwise he would have kept within the Residency entrenchment ; for Cawnpore and Lucknow

went together—if the one fell the other was certain of attack.

Lawrence found that his whole garrison had turned fire-eater overnight. He weighed caution against provocation, and provocation won. He decided to make a demonstration of strength.

His plan was admirably simple. The flower of his army would march along the high road for some few miles, and, if no enemy was to be seen, return to Lucknow. If any enemy force were by chance encountered it would be so small and so scared that it would probably run before a shot had been fired. Here was Mr. Gubbins's "forward movement" with a vengeance: planned with a sort of bright insanity, executed without forethought, and ending in disaster.

They started out on a hot June morning—some seven hundred men. They were breakfastless, they were marching straight into the risen sun, and most of them were already worn out with hard work and constant watching. Some few were suffering, as one Victorian writer liked to put it, "from that unhinged, shaky condition with which the morning revenges itself upon the constitution for the excesses of the previous night"—they had been up late, celebrating their victory in advance.

In short, the whole expedition was a piece of madness. (If men have had no breakfast, they will be easy victims to the sun—the kind of sun that burns through an Oudh summer. If their commander is a sick man, very rusty in his knowledge of strategy, he should stay at home ; and if he is Chief Commissioner of Oudh, sick or well his place is anywhere but in the front line.) Tired in body and listless in mind, they rather dragged themselves out than marched out, and began to drop by the way before a mile had been covered.

Where the good road ended, and a sort of cart-track led across the plains towards Fyzabad, Sir Henry called a halt and scanned the neighbourhood for enemies. There was none to be seen. His men had dropped to the ground in any patch of shade they could find, and were beginning to get together some scraps of breakfast. Sir Henry looked doubtfully at them and asked his brigadier if they could go on. "Of course they can, if ordered," was the answer. So the order was given, breakfast discarded, and the march begun once more.

A mile and a half further on they straggled up to the village of Ishmail-gunj, a dirty little huddle of houses—apparently deserted and ominously silent. Suddenly shot began to fall into their

columns, and Ishmail-gunj came to life with a rattle of musketry. Lawrence's men immediately deployed, with the idea of driving from the village what was, as they thought, the whole enemy force. But as they deployed, the village of Chinhat came into sight : and for the first time the mutineer army was seen. Not five thousand men, as the scouts had reported, but fifteen thousand, not two batteries but six or seven. Between Ishmail-gunj and Chinhat the level plain, visible at last, seemed to be a moving mass of sepoys.

The battle was scarcely begun before it was over. Lawrence's native gunners deserted, his native cavalry fled, his one formidable gun, an eight-inch howitzer, was put out of action when the elephant which drew it stampeded. His men were indifferently armed, while the mutineers, their muskets new and clean, fired with beautiful precision. Heavily outnumbered, the English had nothing left them but retreat ; and as the heat and the sunstroke and the sepoy marksman-ship dropped one man after another, this retreat turned into a *sauve qui peut*.

The English were beaten before they started and disgraced before they came home. Disgraced, that is, in the eyes of their opponents : one cannot blame tired men if they refuse to

accept odds as heavy as twenty to one against them. Sir Henry Lawrence had the port fires lit beside his empty guns, and bluffed the mutineers into holding back their advance for a little : and a force of sixty English cavalrymen formed itself into a rear guard, and charged and counter-charged desperately as the remnants of Gubbins's boasted "forward movement" stumbled back into Lucknow.

It was a city of the silent ; every civilian in the neighbourhood of the Residency had quietly left. Then the guns of the Redan Battery boomed out, and the sepoy pursuit, which had hoped to overwhelm its victims as they crossed the Gomti's iron bridge, wavered and held back. By twos and threes the English straggled into their entrenchment. "Almost every other cavalry volunteer was encumbered by two, three, and even four foot-soldiers, one perhaps holding his hand, another laying fast hold on the crupper, or the tail of the horse, or on all together." They had left one hundred and twelve men, five officers, and a great deal of their morale behind them.

The mutineers planted their guns on the further side of the river, and began, with astonishing efficiency, to pour showers of shot and shell upon the Residency. Others crossed the river

by its two lower bridges, advanced boldly, seized all the houses about the Residency, loop-holed them, and began to fire into Lawrence's confused entrenchment.

Another siege had begun.

XI

THE SIEGE OF LUCKNOW

“THE enemy are very bold,” Lawrence wrote that same evening, “and the Europeans very low. I look upon our position as ten times as bad as it was yesterday. Indeed it is now critical. Unless we are relieved very quickly, say in fifteen or twenty days, we shall hardly be able to maintain our position.”

From a military point of view the Residency was scarcely defensible. The rebels had every advantage—advantage of position, advantage of guns, advantage of men. Against their forces, estimated at anything from eight thousand upwards, the English had five hundred and eighty-five European rank and file, one hundred officers, and some seven hundred and fifty odd sepoys, whose loyalty was often in doubt. Nor was it to be man against man—there were six hundred women and children to defend.

Sepoy ignorance of how to conduct a siege—(they could shoot well, too well, but they had no strategy to speak of and no leaders)—may have

saved the defenders in those first days. The English were demoralised by their defeat at Chinhat, and their entrenchment was not properly organised : native servants screamed and shivered in this courtyard and that, the women knelt and prayed, horses and cattle broke loose and died horribly, the defenders, badly rattled and dazed, fired wildly into an enemy they could scarcely see.

The whole business was almost over at day-break on July 1, when a violent attack was only beaten off with great difficulty and heavy loss. The little island of gardens and houses would not hold out very long against this sort of thing : Sir Henry decided that his other garrison in the Machi Bhawan must be brought in.

But how was that to be done ? Between the old Sikh fortress and the Residency lay nearly a mile of hostile city. Messengers were sent out —volunteers, who scarcely hoped to get there alive, and who died before they had gone a quarter of the way. Then Captain Fulton of the Engineers remembered that there was an ancient semaphoring device on the Residency roof and offered to go up and work it.

It was a post with a cross beam, from which were suspended several black bags, worked with pulleys. As soon as Fulton appeared on the roof

the sepoys concentrated their fire on him : with the help of Carey Lawrence and another Englishman he set the semaphore up three times and three times it was shot down. At last, in a veritable storm of bullets, the three brave men spelled out this message :

“ Spike the guns well, blow up the fort, and retire at midnight.”

At midnight, then, while their enemies were away, plundering and carousing in the city bazaars, Colonel Palmer brought his men quietly out of the fort and, unseen, passed with them through the streets. Scarcely had they crept into the Residency when there was a dull roar, preceded by a sheet of flame, and the earth rocked through the whole city of Lucknow, as the Machi Bhawan fell into ruins.

It was a good thing to have done, for the two positions were untenable, and this new garrison brought a necessary stiffening to the Residency defences. But an enormous quantity of food and as much as two hundred and fifty barrels of gunpowder had gone up in the explosion.

The next morning came up with a fierce sun, burning across the fortified area. Grape and canister from the neighbouring houses poured across its frail mud walls. Huddled into a few acres, where no spot was safe, the defenders kept

up a ceaseless watch and battle from daybreak to nightfall. And so it was to go on for eighty-seven days.

§

Lucknow was to be the grave of two great men, one of them the gentlest man in India. On the morning of July 2 Sir Henry Lawrence was up early, visiting each of the seventeen posts in his three thousand yards of firing line. He had come back to his sitting-room in the Residency House, and was resting on a couch when an eight-inch howitzer shell was thrown right into the apartment, happily without injury to anybody. Sir Henry laughed it off. No artillery-man could ever put two shells in the same place, he said.

His staff begged him to move to some more sheltered place, and he promised that he would do so on the very next day. That evening he was in the same room, dictating a memorandum to Captain Wilson, the deputy Adjutant-General, when another shell came shrieking in. Wilson fell stunned to the ground, and when he got up could see nothing for smoke and dust. He groped his way towards the couch. "Sir Henry, are you hurt?" "I am killed," was the answer, in a low, feeble voice.

When the smoke had cleared off, Wilson saw that his General's bed was crimson with blood. Lawrence had had the upper part of his left thigh fearfully torn : there was no hope for him.

They moved him to a smaller apartment, not so much exposed. "It has never fallen to my lot to witness such a scene of sorrow," wrote Gubbins. "While we clustered round Sir Henry's bed the enemy were pouring a heavy musketry fire upon the place. . . . Sir Henry's attenuated frame, and the severe nature of the injury, at once decided the medical men not to attempt an amputation. . . . It was impossible to avoid sobbing like a child."

On the evening of July 3 he was sinking fast. He received his last Communion, appointed his successors, and exhorted his garrison to be firm. "No surrender," he said. "Let every man die at his post : but never make terms. God help the women and children."

During the night his mind wandered a little. He kept blaming himself for the battle of Chinhat, because he "had been moved by the fear of man to undertake so hazardous an enterprise." And the mutiny haunted him in those last dark hours, as it had haunted him for weeks past. "It is the John Lawrences, the Thomasons, the Edmonstones who have brought India to . . ."

his doctor heard him say. But towards morning his mind became quiet and clear. "Bury me without any fuss," he said ; and asked that no epitaph should be placed on his grave but this : "Here lies Henry Lawrence, who tried to do his duty. May God have mercy on him." He died with the first light of morning.

In the evening some English soldiers were sent to remove the body to its grave. One of them bent over and lifted the coverlet from his face. The deep-set dreamy eyes were shut, but over those long thin features, with the high forehead and flowing beard, a singular beauty had fallen. The soldier leaned down and kissed his brow, and one by one his companions did the same. The defenders could spare no man to blow a bugle at his grave, or to fire a salute ; but this was a better farewell.

They buried him, as he had asked, in the same grave with some common soldiers. His carrying party had gone back to the entrenchment. The parson said a hurried prayer over him, not to be heard above the boom and rattle of gun and musket ; a handful of earth was scattered ; a few civilians shovelled the dry soil over him. Some bullets chipped the wall of the little chapel, and they made for shelter. The Residency cemetery was no place to linger in. . . .

§

At the time of Sir Henry's death and for several days thereafter the mutineers were still short of ammunition. They used to send masses of stone and logs of wood bound with iron crashing over the entrenchment. The men would gather a little heart at this and laugh, "Here comes another beer barrel": but once the sepoys had all their artillery mounted it was no laughing matter. If their fire had been galling before, it was terrific now. They had twenty-five guns of large calibre at different points around the entrenchment, some no more than fifty yards away, and all so near that no shells could silence them.

Whoever was responsible for their disposition was a cunning man. They had been so placed that no English heavy gun could reach them. Ingenious barricades had been put up to prevent their being silenced by musketry. Narrow trenches had been dug, so that nothing could be seen of the gunners concealed in them but their hands as they loaded.

Perhaps the brain who conceived such an admirable system of artillery attack was also behind a certain piece of devastating sniping

which went on from the turret of a building called Johannes House. Terrific damage was being done among the defenders by these snipers, whose leader, one of the ex-King's eunuchs, was known as "Bob the Nailer" because of his terrific accuracy with a double-barrelled gun.

Johannes House was partially blown up by a most successful midnight sortie, but there were too many other buildings which had not been destroyed before the siege began. The mosques especially, which Sir Henry had refused to demolish, were used as cover for enemy riflemen. In many cases nothing but a narrow lane separated defender from attacker, and the English could hear sepoy conversation in the stillness of the night.

It was a stillness which somewhat daunted their enemies. At first the English shot aimlessly, as though to keep their hearts up in the darkness : but they were soon made to reserve their fire until they had something to fire at. The sepoys could never understand this—night after night they would seem to be investing an entrenchment of the dead. The insults they flung across would be unanswered, their arrogant conversations apparently unheard. Once their band came out and played "God Save the Queen" beneath the defenders' walls.

Certainly if the sepoy had shown any inclination for direct and constant attack—not with gunfire but hand to hand—they would have taken the Residency within the first few days. But, contemptuous of death as many of them were, they were never happy except when behind walls. Perhaps they wanted for leaders, too. At any rate they contented themselves with pouring in, day after day, a hotter and more deadly fire.

And day after day the garrison diminished. The fury of the enemy was only one of their evils. Cholera, fever, diarrhoea, smallpox, boils, flies rising like a plague from the carcasses of horses and bullocks . . . these were the things they had to contend with. And now a series of rainstorms, short and incredibly heavy, alternated with the burning sun, breeding fresh insects out of the misty earth.

The dead were sewn in white sheets and buried at night in the Residency churchyard, with the parson under fire the whole time. There was another sort of burial, scarcely more perfunctory. After nightfall detachments would be out until midnight or one in the morning “ grubbing in wet holes making receptacles for dead horses and bullocks—pretty employment for the educated youth of the nineteenth century.”

The Lucknow women were better off than their

sisters had been at Cawnpore. There the siege was a daily massacre : here they had a chance of living, though life was terribly difficult and uncertain. They had food of a sort ; there was plenty of water, so that they could wash their clothes—without soap or starch ; and there was always some kind of protection against the enemy's fire.

In the Residency House itself most of the better-class families were quartered. First the upper rooms on the South Side became uninhabitable ; then on the North Side ; then the second storey was pronounced unsafe. After that there was serious overcrowding on the ground floor : and the men took their beds into the hall, or under the porch, where they stood a fair chance of being shot in their sleep.

For a time these ladies kept their hearts up. They used to make a sad little pretence of family dinner in a central suite in the Residency, though an occasional stray shot might set someone choking blood over the table. Some of them, we are told, came to be expert judges of the enemy projectiles which entered their buildings, telling their weight to within a few ounces. And once we hear of them “singing part songs in the portico, to the accompaniment of rushing shells and musket bullets.” But as the siege

progressed, and those who were quartered in the smaller houses had to be removed to underground chambers, their resistance to melancholy and disease grew less and less. It was their task of nursing, perhaps, which kept them from insanity.

The children were pitiful. "It was curious to see how their plays harmonised with what was going on around us. They would make balls of earth, and, throwing them against the wall, would say they were shells bursting." But they began to die off rapidly, deprived as they were of good food, good air, and proper exercise : and others were born, and perhaps that was worse.

In the stifling mid-afternoon, between bombardments, if the rain held off and their many duties permitted, they would creep out into that desolation which had once been the Residency grounds. At the last they fell into a sort of resignation. "We used to say," wrote Lady Inglis, "what a comfort it would be if we could write to those we loved and tell them we were prepared for death. John (Colonel Inglis) said he had made up his mind that every man should die at his post. But what were the sick and wounded, the women and helpless children to do? . . . At one time he talked of blowing us up at the last minute, but I have since heard

that this would have been impracticable.—It was strange how calmly we talked on these subjects."

Colonel Inglis, who had taken over the command from Lawrence, was an extremely efficient soldier, and a good leader. But he could not call manna from heaven. First bread became scarce—the bakers had deserted in a body early in the siege. For a time the gun bullocks supplied the meat, but soon the sepoys shot them down faster than the garrison could eat them, and meat became scarce too. Tea and sugar ran out almost at once. A number of native soldiers deserted, leaving the laconic message, "Because we have no opium." Tobacco and rum went more slowly, but at last the soldiers were reduced to smoking pieces of wood and cane and drinking what little water was allowed them.

Whenever a "well-furnished officer" was killed, his effects were put up to auction, and food and clothing commanded fabulous prices. As the weeks passed hunger came nearer and nearer.

§

It was not the sepoys' policy to attack the Residency, partly from distaste for open fighting, partly because they believed they could, in

course of time, blow the whole entrenchment to bits with mine and roundshot. And they counted on hunger, death, loneliness and dejection to weaken the garrison's resistance. There was something more cold-blooded and calculating about this Lucknow siege than you could find elsewhere in the story of 1857.

That is why there are only two major attacks to record. On July 20 lookout posts on the Residency turrets reported large bodies of sepoys on the move in different directions, and every man in the garrison stood to arms. About ten in the morning a large mine was sprung near the Redan Battery, fortunately missing its mark, and the whole position was assaulted by a terrific fire of roundshot and musketry. Under cover of this a vast mass of besiegers came surging against the entrenchment near the Redan Battery, only to reel back under a hot fire: simultaneously attacks were made on the Cawnpore Battery and three other posts. All morning they continued to charge and retreat, with a sort of desperate gallantry which might have bewildered the defenders had they not remarked, in the front of every attack, a number of wild Afghan swordsmen—casual winter labourers in Lucknow, who had stayed away from their mountains in the

hopes of a battle like this. By four in the afternoon the assault was over. The sepoyes had nothing to show for their efforts : literally hundreds of them had been killed, while the English losses amounted to four dead and twelve wounded. And all this, so the elated garrison told itself, after a preparation of three weeks' intensive bombardment.

The second general attack was made on August 10, when a mine was sprung near the Brigade Messhouse, and a breach opened through which a regiment might have passed in unbroken order. As the sepoyes came in upon the lower Residency lawns a violent musketry fire caught them in their front and flank, and the Cawnpore Battery mowed down their rear : and once more they were rolled back. A few minutes later another mine blew up under the post known as Sago's House, hurling three men of the 32nd high across their entrenchment into hostile ground, from which they started up and came running back, unhurt but "slightly singed." Then a formidable rush was made on Sanders' House ; and Martin Gubbins, turned artillery commander, worked like a hero to keep his guns intact ; and the Cawnpore Battery blazed and thundered ; and the day went out with the sepoyes still on their side of the entrenchment. Their losses had

been enormous : the English counted three Europeans and two native soldiers dead and twelve wounded.

There were better ways of reducing this stubborn garrison. The sepoys had their information from the Residency. After nightfall native deserters crept out with encouraging tales, and letters wrapped up in stones were thrown across : and all this treacherous information had the same burden—The place was filled with sick, the daily bombardments were doing terrible damage, the houses were growing shaky, the rooms were falling in, the mud trench walls and the palisades were being riddled to a paper thinness. It was just a question of time.

So the siege resolved itself into a deadly routine —terrific bombardments at morning and night-fall, and constant mining and counter-mining. Day followed day, each one exactly like its predecessor : there was no relief from the heavy rain, the burning sun, the evening misty with fever-damp ; from the presence of death ; from the plague of flies, and mice, and enormous rats ; from the pervading stench of gunpowder, blood, and decayed cattle ; from the sight of an entrenchment slowly crumbling into “a ruin of dead walls.”

The defenders who lived and moved through

this nightmare of monotony had only one diversion, and that was the arrival of "Ungud," their native spy-runner, an extraordinary and almost mythical figure. Nobody quite knew how he came in and went out—"Nor could any picture more characteristic of the siege be presented," Martin Gubbins wrote in his diary, "than one which should represent Ungud just after one of his midnight entrances, recounting to our eagerly listening ears the events which he had witnessed. The low room on the ground floor, with a single light carefully screened on the outer side, lest it should attract the bullets of the enemy, the anxious faces of the men who crowded round and listened with breathless attention to question and answer, the exclamations of joy as pieces of good tidings were given out, and laughter at some of Ungud's jeers upon the enemy.—More retired, would be shown the indistinct forms of the women in their night attire, who had been attracted from their rooms in the hopes of catching early some part of the good news which had come in. The animated and intelligent face of our messenger as he assured us of the near approach of help, occupies the foreground. All these together form a scene which must live, as long as life remains, in the memory of us all."

What was this "near approach of help"? On

July 22 Ungud came in with a story they hardly dared believe. A handful of men under Havelock had defeated the Nana in three engagements, and made themselves masters of Cawnpore : to men who had feared the Nana's arrival amongst their enemies this was wonderful news. Under cover of a heavy rain Ungud slipped away with dispatches.

Many people professed to doubt his information—it was so difficult to keep elated very long : on July 25 Ungud crept back into an atmosphere of the utmost despondency. But this time he brought a written answer from Colonel B. Fraser-Tytler, confirming the good news. Havelock's force was sufficient to defeat the enemy, the troops were crossing the river, they might be expected at Lucknow within five or six days. It is to be hoped the Colonel never found out what damage this irresponsible letter did.

For four days the garrison lived in hopes : on July 29 came their bitter disappointment. "As we were sitting at dinner to-day," Lady Inglis wrote in her diary, "we suddenly heard loud cheers. In an instant we all ran out, and I certainly thought that our reinforcements had arrived. Everyone seemed in a state of great excitement. Colonel Palmer rushed up, and, shaking hands with me, congratulated me on

our deliverance. I seized baby and was running with him to Mrs. Cowper when I heard John (Colonel Inglis) say in a very angry voice, ' It's the most absurd thing I ever heard ! ' My heart sank at once. He looked so much annoyed that we did not like to speak to him. However, at last he told us that the officer on the lookout tower, a brave but not a very wise man, had heard heavy firing in the distance, and making up his mind that it was our relieving force fighting their way in, rushed down to communicate the news to the garrison. It spread like wildfire ; men in hospital, who were only just able to move, jumped up and said they must help the poor fellows coming in.—The ladies in the brigade messroom ran to the top of the house to see the force approaching, and were remaining there in a most exposed condition until ordered down in no very courteous terms.—The firing turned out to be a salute from the enemy, in honour of some national event."

For seven more days they kept a pathetic nightly lookout for the rockets which were to announce Havelock's approach. On August 6 a native runner called Aodhan Singh came in with the news that the advance had been held up at Mangalwahr.

Ungud's arrival on August 15 increased their

confidence, and if they leave us I do not see how the defences are to be manned. . . .”

Havelock's very typical answer was brought in on August 29. (The italicised words were in Greek characters.)

“ MY DEAR COLONEL,

I have your letter of the 16th inst. I can only say do not *negotiate*, but rather perish sword in hand. Sir Colin Campbell, who came out at a day's notice to command upon news arriving of General Anson's death, promises me *fresh troops*, and you will be my first care. The *reinforcements* may reach you at from *twenty to twenty-five* days, and I will prepare everything for a march to Lucknow.

Yours very sincerely,

H. HAVELOCK, Brigadier-General.

To Colonel Inglis, H.M. 32nd Regiment.”

§

September dragged in. The defenders, reduced to half their number by wounds and sickness, went about their tasks mechanically. Even the daring sorties, with which they had tried to relieve the strain that was put upon them, began to flag. There was the usual cannonade at morning and

nightfall ; the usual mending of their entrenchment when it was over ; the usual digging and delving and burying of dead. The whole place was falling about their ears. The Residency House had had its verandah shot away, and then a particularly heavy rain brought down its tottering north-east wing, burying six men of the 3rd Regiment under the débris. Weakened by constant gunfire, high winds, and heavy rains, the walls of other buildings came falling down too, leaving the defenders the merest skeletons to cling to. One brick house, behind the Cawnpore Battery, had its front wall neatly sliced through in a straight line by bullets and round shot—at a point just one inch above the rampart. Lucknow goes down into history as a defence of the indefensible.

In that life of unremitting vigilance one name stands above the rest. Eye-witness accounts—such as those of Martin Gubbins, Julia Inglis and Captain Wilson—do not go in for heroics. They seem to have been affected, even in retrospect, by the tortured melancholy of that existence. But every one of them pays tribute to Captain James Fulton of the Engineers. “To his untiring perseverance, boldness and skill,” says Gubbins, “the Lucknow garrison, under Providence, owe their safety.”

Fulton was in command of the miners—mostly Cornishmen, with a few Sikhs. Very early in the siege it had become obvious that the sepoys intended to blow the entrenchment wide open with a ring of mines : and it was Fulton's constant endeavour so to dig his counter-mines that he could strike into each sepoy gallery and use it. He spent much of his time underground, listening "like a terrier at a rat hole" ; and when the early alarms and excursions above ground had merged at last into the general monotony, most of the drama and variety in the siege concentrated itself upon his work.

When the sepoys escaped his watchfulness the consequences were ominous. On August 18, for instance, they undermined a house, brought the better part of it down in ruins, and opened a breach in the entrenchment that was full thirty feet wide. Only their unwillingness to follow this success up with bayonets saved the garrison on that occasion.

Much of Fulton's work was done at night, with the enemy often no more than a bare fifty yards away. On innumerable occasions, hearing the sound of his spades as they turned up the new earth, sepoys would throw in stones, brickbats, squibs and rockets, or creep up and thrust over long bamboo poles wrapped at the end in oiled

and lighted cloth. They recognised whom they had to deal with : and it is no exaggeration to say that, but for Fulton's courage and for his genius in detecting mines and driving counter-mines, the entrenchment would have been blown level with the ground long before September.

That is why September 14 is the black date. Early that day Fulton "was lying at full length in one of the embrasures," so runs Captain Birch's report, "with a telescope in his hand. He turned his face with a smile on it and said, 'They are just going to fire,' and sure enough they did. The shot took away the whole of the back of Captain Fulton's head, leaving his face like a mask still on his neck. When he lay on his back on a bed we could not see how he had been killed."

The whole garrison was grief-stricken. Fulton had been "the life and soul of everything that was persevering, chivalrous and daring." With him their last hope had gone. They had long ceased to listen for relieving gunfire ; they had even ceased to ask each other what could be happening in the rest of India. Their besiegers were growing more and more numerous, which argued that mutiny was still unchecked in Oudh. And they were quite resigned. With their rags

dyed a drab protective brown by a mixture of red and black office inks, with their pale thin faces and haunted eyes, they looked like men who had just enough resistance left to follow every word of Havelock's rhetoric—"Do not negotiate, but rather perish sword in hand."

On September 16 Ungud was again sent out with dispatches. There was no hope behind this move—they hardly even expected him to return. But he did.

He came in on the 22nd, and he brought a letter with him.

Major-General Sir James Outram begged to inform Colonel Inglis that a fully equipped army had crossed the Ganges, and would, D.V., be with them soon. Fearing to provoke the enemy, the garrison did not dare to cheer. But each man looked at his neighbour as if he were slowly waking from a long bad dream. . . .

§

The morning of September 23 broke clear and calm. Far off in the direction of Cawnpore they could hear the sound of gunfire: by two in the afternoon it had become much louder and more frequent.

Men in the precarious lookouts reported no

sign of friends, either on that afternoon or during the whole of the next day. But again, very early on the morning of September 25, they heard guns. They seemed to be drawing nearer, and by ten o'clock were quite loud, keeping up an intensive bombardment for over an hour. They ceased very suddenly, and shortly after the look-outs reported city people flying over the bridges, carrying bundles on their heads. Minute by minute the flight increased—now sepoys and irregular cavalrymen could be seen in the mob, crossing the bridges or throwing themselves in and swimming over.

The guns of the Redan Battery, which fronted the river, opened up triumphantly, but they had scarcely started before the besiegers poured in a perfect hurricane of shot and shell from every battery they had. Nothing like it had been known before—even untouched rooms in the very interior of the Residency's ground floor were visited by round shot.

It was a last effort, fading away into a desultory fire. By two in the afternoon the smoke of guns could be seen here and there in the far suburbs ; soon they could distinguish the rattle of musketry ; and by four o'clock the lookout officers could actually make out the uniforms of European troops in the distance. For an hour

the sounds of fighting grew closer and more confused ; then a sharp burst of musketry was heard in the streets, and a few minutes later Highlanders and Sikhs were seen to turn into the main road leading to the Residency. Up this they charged, loading, shouting and firing as they came along : in their midst, scarcely distinguishable in the gathering dusk, rode the two generals.

There was a short delay while the defenders cleared off a mound of earth which had been thrown up against the inside : then the gates of the famous Baillie Guard were thrown open for the first time in more than a hundred days, and a stream of bearded Sikhs and heated, worn, dusty Highlanders came pouring in. Nothing could equal their enthusiasm. They stopped everyone they met with, "Are you one of them ? God bless you. We thought to have found only your bones." The ladies of the garrison had assembled with their children under the portico. Their rescuers milled about them, seizing their hands in congratulation, catching up the children and passing them from one rough embrace to the next. . . .

"At six o'clock," wrote Lady Inglis, "tremendous cheering was heard, and it was known that relief had reached us. I was standing outside our door when Ellicock came rushing in for

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John's sword, and a few minutes later he (John) came to us accompanied by a short, quiet-looking, gray-haired man, whom I knew at once to be General Havelock. He shook hands with me and said he feared we had suffered a great deal."

THE HORROR OF CAWNPORE

BIGADIER-GENERAL HENRY HAVELOCK was not in fashion at Calcutta. From his arrival on June 17 to his departure on June 25 it was rather the right thing to laugh at him. The ladies called him "fussy and tiresome," as no doubt he was ; the men condemned him as a "fossil, dug up and fit only to be turned into pipe-clay."

Havelock was sixty-two—"very small and upright and stiff, very white and grey and really like an iron ramrod." His face was at once prim and stern, not a pleasant combination, he was austere and quick to offence, and his disposition was strongly religious. He had no skill at drawing-room conversation, nor any desire to ingratiate himself ; conscious that his merits had been consistently overlooked, he was at great pains to be the soldier, and when he dined—so Lady Canning wrote—"he always dined in his sword and made his son do the same. He wore more medals than I ever saw on anyone, and it was a

joke that he carried all his money round his neck." But Lady Canning, who knew him better than the others and spent her time trying to keep him in good humour, got to be rather fond of him.

"His little old stiff figure," she said, "looks as active and fit for use as if he were made of steel." And indeed he was a far better soldier than anyone gave him credit for. Lack of influence, and lack of charm and breeding, had kept him back. He had seen many younger and less able men promoted over his head, and had accepted this as God's will, and waited patiently for his day to come.

His soldiers could have given an account of him that would have surprised and perhaps chagrined the gossipers in Calcutta. This prim little creature was actually a great commander and almost an inspired leader! Through one disappointing year after another he had trained himself for high command. Through one campaign after another he had shown an astonishing coolness and scorn of ease, an antique sense of duty and a fiery will. He was a bad man to cross and a good man to follow. He was always, said one who had served under him, as sour as if he had swallowed a pint of vinegar except when he was being fired at, when he looked like a

schoolboy out for a holiday. He had a taste for Napoleonic oratory, which went oddly with the rest of his make-up, and which his soldiers, normally impatient of such flights, cheerfully accepted from him. This was the man whom Sir Patrick Grant, temporary Commander-in-Chief, had selected to lead the first English advance into Oudh.

He had about the smallest force that ever set out to rescue an empire. But this was the great opportunity which he had waited for so long, and he set out for Allahabad with a high heart.

Some two hours before this new general's arrival on June 30, Neill had sent Major Renaud out in the direction of Cawnpore with about nine hundred men and two guns, and orders to deal faithfully with the rebels. Over the breakfast table in Allahabad fort Havelock approved this order and then formally took over the command. Half of his force—a battalion of Madras Fusiliers and a battalion of the 84th Foot—was already in or about the city : but the 64th and 78th Highlanders had still to arrive in Calcutta, and he was forced to wait until July 7 before he could make a move. These four European battalions, one hundred and thirty Sikhs, eighteen irregular cavalrymen and six guns made up his entire strength.

On July 2 a native runner brought in the dreadful news of Cawnpore, and Renaud, three marches up country, was told to halt and wait for further orders. Neill, hot-headed as always, nearly quarrelled with Havelock over this, and was so misguided as to send a telegram to Grant begging that Renaud should be told to press on. But Havelock, with an invincible sourness, said nothing at all and had his own way.

On July 7 his little force marched out, into a dull afternoon at the beginning of the rainy season.

The men made slow progress at first, for half of them were unused to Indian conditions—peculiarly unfavourable at this time of year. It was muddy underfoot and sweltering overhead ; but Havelock, realising that the fall of Cawnpore had released a large body of troops and that he must expect dangerous opposition within the next few days, pushed on with all the speed he could.

At midnight on July 11-12 his men came swinging into Renaud's moonlit camp, their pipers skirling "The Campbells are Coming." Not waiting to rest, the two forces united and pushed on together. The country through which they had already passed was filled with rumours. The women and children were alive

in Cawnpore, but some had been publicly insulted in the market-place : this is what they had heard, with some hideously swollen tales of the river massacre : and they felt they could not waste an hour that might get them nearer to their country-women.

Their eagerness almost undid them. At seven the next morning they were about to breakfast in a spot some four miles from Fatehpore, a town they had vowed to sack and fire for the murder of a certain Judge Tudor Tucker. The fires were lit and the food was preparing when a twenty-four-pounder ploughed up the earth, almost under their general's feet ; hard upon it came the 2nd Native Light Cavalry in the Company's grey uniform. Behind was a whole sepoy army, fresh from Cawnpore and ready for another massacre.

Havelock's men, hastily formed up to meet this attack, shocked the mutineers into a disorderly retreat. These sepoys and sowars had been anticipating a pleasant morning with Renaud's meagre force, and this well-handled little army, with a formidable line of guns in the centre, was altogether too much for them. Hot in pursuit, the British came violently into Fatehpore, captured it and gave it over to plunder. Leaving his Sikhs behind to burn the town, a

task for which they had an especial aptitude, Havelock went grimly ahead.

On July 15 he drove another band of mutineers from the walled gardens and heavy groves of Aong, where the very gallant Renaud was slain : stormed a masonry bridge across the swollen Pandu Nadi with such ferocity that the sepoys—who had undermined the whole structure—lost their heads and forgot to blow it up : and urged his men, weary with sun and muddy roads, straight onwards for Cawnpore.

That evening they pitched their bivouacs not far from the Pandu Nadi. Casual natives whom their pickets brought in had stories for them—all the wretched currency of the Cawnpore bazaars, even more debased in the telling—and they felt that nothing could hold their advance back. They were up before dawn, and marching towards the city.

Not far ahead their road forked, running left-handed towards Delhi and right-handed towards the old cantonments and the city of Cawnpore. Across this fork the Nana Sahib's army was drawn up in a rough semicircle, and so disposed that any attack against its centre would certainly end in disaster. But Havelock was no book-soldier, as his detractors in Calcutta had called him, and he had no sooner perceived the trap

than he had found a way to spring it. He summoned his officers to a hasty conference, and went over his plans again and again, sketching them out in the dust with a sabre scabbard.

He had decided on a flank movement against the enemy's left, a movement screened by a grove of trees for some part of the way but, because of the sepoy's enormous superiority in artillery, demanding all his soldiers' endurance if it were to come off successfully.

And it was successful. Yelling like fiends, his Highlanders cleared a walled village of sepoy's, spiked a whole battery of heavy guns, turned the enemy's left flank in upon its centre, scattered the centre, where a brief rally had been made behind some howitzers, and followed the whole rout in towards Cawnpore. An amazing little cavalry force of eighteen sabres had gone ahead of them into the enemy centre. The 84th Foot, meanwhile, was making short work of the sepoy right flank. It seemed as if the day had been won.

But the British were tired out, and their artillery had lagged far behind, the gun-bullocks struggling in a heavy mud. Not two miles from the city the sepoy's made a last stand, dragging one twenty-four-pounder and two smaller guns across the road, under the eyes of the Nana him-

self ; who, with some flicker of royalty, had dragged his gaudy presence into the firing line.

For a moment it seemed that the tide was turning. Cymbals, bugles and drums sounded triumph in the Nana's lines. His infantry began to move forward—his cavalry spread out as though to overwhelm the little force ahead of them—his three guns in the centre poured out an incessant stream of grape and round shot.

The British were lying on the ground, behind whatever cover there was : it looked as though they would never find the heart to get up again. But Havelock, standing up as coolly as if he were on parade and smiling his thin smile, called on his men to rise and pointed at the sepoy battery. His son was the first to go—taking the remnants of the little cavalry force with him in a mad charge on the Nana's twenty-four-pounder. Then the Scotsmen heaved themselves to their feet, and the 84th, and the Fusiliers, and went staggering through a tempest of grape.

When Maude came up with his artillery the sepoys were running for the shelter of Cawnpore and there was nothing for him to do but pour a terrible fire into them before they got there. The battle was over.

Too tired to march another furlong, the British bivouacked where they lay : to-morrow

they would take the women and children into safety.

§

There were two hundred and one of them, crammed into the tiny Beebee-ghar : some had been there nearly three weeks now. Perhaps five men had been spared the Nana's massacres, and they were in the Beebee-ghar as well. All the space which these people had was two rooms, each twenty feet by ten, some windowless closets which had once been servants' rooms, and an open court about fifteen yards square.

Perhaps the majority of those women had never even realised that such foul dens as this existed. The place had not been cleaned for them, of course : they had neither furniture, bedding, nor straw : they could choose between a coarse bamboo matting and the hard floor, with the dirt of two households—that of an English officer's native mistress and a Eurasian clerk—well grimed into it. For food they had unleavened dough and lentil cakes—and on one day the children had been given some meat. They were served by sweepers, the lowest of the low in India, and as a further degradation were made to go two by two into the Nana's stables and grind corn there. Their wardress was known as the

"Beegum"—she was a waiting-maid to the courtezan who was then in favour with the Nana—a tall, grim, handsome creature with no bowels of mercy in her.

Seventy-five yards away the Nana held his fantastic court in what had once been a hotel—a large, yellow-painted building which suited his gaudy tastes. It was not a happy court. Every night, it is true, the ladies in the Beebee-ghar would hear the sounds of music and dancing, but by day the Nana found it more and more difficult to make a show. Once upon a time he had created a magnificent impression with his proclamations—"By the bounty of the glorious Almighty," ran one of them, issued just after his first massacre, "the yellow-faced and narrow-minded people have been shot to Hell." But of late these highly flavoured documents were not listened to. And he was losing his popularity. They had ceased giving him those tremendous titles which belonged to a Peshwa and a great conqueror: "*Nana soor*"—pig of a Nana—would be heard more often in the streets of Cawnpore.

It was little pleasure now to see the English ladies take their daily exercise on the verandah of their prison, with half the bazaar-scum looking on. (Hence those rumours of public indignity

which had so infuriated Havelock's army.) These ladies had become a burden, for if by any chance the army reported to be coming up from Allahabad should fight its way in—what evidence those same ladies would have against him !

They were dying off fast, but not fast enough to pacify these new fears of his. Havelock was no more than a day's march off, and the Nana was already regretting the small effort he had made to keep them alive. . . .

We have only one record of their deaths, kept by a half-caste doctor who shared their prison from July 7 to July 15. In that period eighteen women, seven children and a Hindu nurse died : and the doctor added one pathetic little entry—*eck beebee, ap se*, one baby, of itself. Generally speaking it was flies, mosquitoes, dirt, prickly heat, cramped quarters and wretched food which killed them—that, and the misery which closed in upon them day after day.

Between four and five in the afternoon of July 16, Bala Rao, the Nana's brother, came into the city with tidings of imminent defeat. It was decided to make one last stand south of Cawnpore, but in the meantime, Bala Rao hinted, the prisoners had better be killed, so that there might be less evidence against the Nana. There was some little hesitation. The palace womenfolk

had sworn they would throw themselves from their windows if the Nana committed any more murders against their sex : but the deed might be kept from them until their fit had passed.

So a messenger was sent to the Beebee-ghar. Would the men come into the Nana Sahib's presence, for he had some private business to transact with them ? Knowing exactly what this meant, and not daring to frighten the women with their knowledge, the five Englishmen went quietly out.

§

He wore a gold lace turban, and he was sitting under a tree with his officers. That was the last time any Englishman saw him alive ; and those that saw him then did not live a minute afterwards. The five were shot down and their bodies thrown carelessly on the grass ; and the Nana and his staff hurried off towards the battlefield. It was perhaps five in the afternoon.

The "Beegum" had her instructions. She brought them to the sepoys guarding the Beebee-ghar, who received them with a look of disgusted surprise, and began most reluctantly to load. Then they went as far as the doorway of Beebee-ghar, fired a shot or two into the ceiling, and walked off. They were sick of murder.

But the "Beegum" was not so easily baulked. She sent a messenger into the city and presently five men appeared—two Hindu peasants, two butchers, and one of the Nana's bodyguard, who was also the "Beegum's" lover. All five had drawn swords in their hands. They climbed the verandah steps, opened the door of the Beebeeghar, and went in. It was twilight.

Who could describe that slaughter? Once the "Beegum's" sweetheart appeared with his sword broken, and went off to the Nana's house to fetch another. A little later he came out for a third.

About nightfall they locked the house. The screams had ceased: the groans went on all night.

Early the next morning, while Havelock's men still slept in their bivouacs beyond Cawnpore, the "Beegum" and her five butchers came back and unlocked the doors. There were some townsfolk with them and a few sepoys, looking sickly and apprehensive in the grey light. One by one the bodies were dragged out by their hair, and stripped of their clothing if it seemed worth so much trouble. There was a deep empty well some hundred yards or so away and into that they were heaped.

Three could still talk—three women, unspeak-

ably hacked about, to whom even the small mercy of death had been denied all that sweltering night. They begged to be put out of their misery, and some one of the five took his sword to them at last.

A few children were taken out alive and unhurt, so small that they had been overlooked in the massacre. The terrified little creatures ran round and round the well—"and there was none to save them. No : no one said a word or tried to save them" : they were thrown down living among the pile of corpses.

By now it was bright morning.

Perhaps it was a few of Havelock's Highlanders, searching for loot or drink, who first came upon that deserted house and well. But soon half the British soldiers were there, some reeling with liquor already. It was the thought of saving *these* that had driven them with such fury from Allahabad : they looked over the well's edge, and some cursed, and some turned away and vomited.

Inside the Beebee-ghar the walls were hideously splashed with blood. Bits of clothing and bits of flesh, handfuls of long hair . . . what evidence could the Nana have hoped to conceal, that could have been more telling than this? But to Havelock's men it was too silent and anonymous.

They came back later and began to write messages over the walls—"Your wives and children are at the mercy of savages," "My child! My child!" and the like. Of all the horrors of Cawnpore, this crude piece of melodrama was not the least.

The news spread quickly, and the English made a slogan from it. *Remember Cawnpore*—and the bayonets went home twice as hard. *Remember Cawnpore*—and sepoy offenders were placed against the muzzles of guns and their entrails were blown into their comrades' faces. *Remember Cawnpore*—and Muhammadans, sewn in greasy pigskins before their execution, were cremated afterwards, to their certain damnation: and Hindus were made to defile themselves, sweeping churches at the bayonet's point, before the hangmen got them. *Remember Cawnpore*—and out went the amateur hanging parties, stringing them up in figures of eight; and the villages were burned; and the Major Ouvrys held their "battues" with sepoys for partridges. Innocent or guilty—it scarcely mattered any longer, so burning was the hatred and so blind. *Fas est ab hoste doceri* was what the "Calcutta Englishman" carried on its front page—it is right to be taught by the enemy. The English were good pupils: if Cawnpore was hideous,

the revenge that was taken for Cawnpore deserves no other epithet.

§

The Nana Sahib had proclaimed a victory in the city, and fled across the river into Oudh, swearing that he would do away with himself. His army was reported to be still in the neighbourhood of Bithoor, under Tantia Topee, and Havelock would have given much to pursue it ; for there was every chance that it would grow larger rather than smaller, and Tantia Topee was a good soldier. But Havelock's army was recovering from an orgy of drinking—in those days no discipline on earth could have kept the British soldier from liquor : and the hospital was overflowing with inebriates. Those few who had kept sober had mostly done so because they were too ill with the sun, or too weary from their fighting and marching. There was nothing for it but to wait in Cawnpore, impound whatever liquor had not yet been broached, and hope that the sepoy army was sufficiently demoralised not to attack the city.

Reinforcements began to dribble in. Lieutenant Spurgin came up by steamboat with a party, and Neill marched in from Allahabad with a few men. The latter was told to command

Cawnpore, restore order there, and investigate the massacres : Havelock himself was anxious to get on to Lucknow. Nobody envied Neill his job. He had three hundred rifles, and the neighbourhood was already filling up with large bodies of undisciplined mutineers. But three hundred men were all that Havelock could spare. It left him with an army of fifteen hundred foot-soldiers, forty-one cavalry and six guns—with this he had to cross forty miles of hostile country, break through the ring of fire at Lucknow and bring its garrison out.

Fraser-Tytler, his chief of staff, had been sending optimistic messages by spy-runner into Lucknow : within six days, he wrote, a relieving army would be under the Residency walls. Havelock himself had no such assurance.

Crossing the swollen Ganges was a task in itself. It took the ferry eight hours to make a single journey, and it was not until July 25 that the whole force had been gathered on the further side of the river. Four days later Havelock won two brilliant victories at Unao and Bashiratganj ; but his force had been reduced by cholera and gunfire to eight hundred and fifty rifles, and he decided to retire. At this there was bitter opposition. It was thought that the reputation he had won by his two victories would bring him unham-

pered into Lucknow ; Neill's messenger brought a furious and undisciplined letter from Cawnpore ; but Havelock had made his mind up and would not change. On July 31 he was back in Cawnpore again, to give an unrepentant Neill the worst dressing down that hot-headed gentleman had ever received in his life.

For the next two weeks he played a game of battledore and shuttlecock with the sepoys. On August 4 he made another attempt, found the enemy in force at Bashiratganj, lost a few men through a villainous cholera which was bred by the Oudh swamps, and retired upon his base. On August 12 he suddenly appeared again, took Bashiratganj by storm, and might have gone ahead if a message from Neill, reporting four thousand mutineers at Bithoor, had not brought him back in a hurry. August 16 found him opposite Bithoor, where his tired men completely routed Tantia Topee, and dragged themselves back into Cawnpore.

And there he was forced to wait. Sickness and death had heavily depleted his numbers ; the native chiefs of Oudh had at last thrown in their lot with the mutiny ; and with the whole province against him it would have been madness to try to win through into Lucknow. For thirty days he held on in Cawnpore, resting his men, and

waiting for reinforcements : when they arrived, Major-General Sir James Outram came in with them.

Outram had been Havelock's commander in Persia, and from Persia he was himself summoned in June, with the laconic explanation, "We want all our best men here." On his arrival he was put in command of all troops between Calcutta and Cawnpore, and made the Chief Commissioner of Oudh, for whatever that title was worth.

His progress up country had been slow. Since Neill's departure communications had been put out of gear, and the country was by no means quiet. He did not arrive in Allahabad until September 5, and it took him ten days more to get into Cawnpore.

Once there he refused to take over the command—"in admiration of General Havelock's brilliant deeds." This was done to salve Havelock's feelings—not for nothing was Outram called "the Bayard of India": but the move was more chivalrous than sensible. It was one thing to concede another man the glory of taking Lucknow ; it was quite another to have to stand by and take all responsibility for his errors. Should anything go amiss Outram could never escape from the fact that he was senior general.

None the less, he had himself enrolled in the irregular cavalry, and started out on September 20 more or less as a private gentleman. With the reinforcements that he had been able to bring in, the army numbered something over three thousand men, which Havelock divided into two brigades, under the command of Colonels Neill and Hamilton. By September 21 they were once more in front of Bashiratganj.

The enemy had disappeared, and the country seemed empty in front of them. For the next two days they struggled across a land half-flooded with monsoon rains, and by September 23 were almost within sight of Lucknow. Across their path lay the Alum Bagh, the "Garden of the World," its pleasure grounds and summer-house bristling with sepoys, far-flung outposts of the great city. Havelock's guns ploughed forward into close range, and when these had breached the garden walls, the Madras Fusiliers went through in a wild bayonet charge : it was hard fighting, but soon over.

That evening, and all the next day they waited, while the enemy position was reconnoitred : on September 25 they made their final advance. It was a bright cool morning when they had their first sight of Lucknow, two miles ahead of them across a wide canal : they had to cross the canal's

bridge, swing right-handed beneath the city walls, break into open ground where the canal joined the River Gamti, and then turn left-handed through palaces and gardens and fight their way upwards into the Residency.

Neill's first brigade, led by Outram himself, crossed the bridge under heavy fire, captured two guns that were doing great damage amongst their artillerymen and cattle, and pressed onwards towards the Gamti. Behind them came Havelock with the second brigade, a battalion of Highlanders bringing up his rear : he too ran the gauntlet of fire from city walls and houses, and came safely through into park-like country along the river's bank. The leading troops halted, the heavy guns and Havelock's second brigade closed in, and the whole army turned left-handed. It was already afternoon.

Guns across the Gamti on the right, from the Kaiserbagh on the left, from a whole maze of palaces and gardens in front—Lucknow loosed its fury on them. But they had taken too much time already, and pushed doggedly ahead, anxious to get into the Residency before night-fall. It was terribly slow going and five hundred men fell in the course of it. Dusk added to their confusion as one battalion after another staggered through this bullet-swept lane and that into the

Residency high-road. There were only a few more hundred yards to go, and Havelock and Outram hurried forward to join their Sikhs and Highlanders, yelling like demons in the front : somewhere in the rear Neill lay mortally wounded.

At the head of their troops the two generals literally fought their way in yard by yard. The noise was deafening ; in the smoke and darkness you could hardly tell friend from enemy. From pit trench and battery, from behind sand-bags piled on shattered houses, from every post and vantage-point the Residency garrison peered out into the dusk. Then the 78th Highlanders, with blackened faces and crimson bayonets, went streaming through the Baillie Guard : and the men still fighting up the road behind them caught the sounds of a wild cheering, and knew the Residency had been relieved at last.

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But the next morning brought another story. Havelock's losses had been terrific, and the best he could do was to reinforce the garrison. It was not a real relief : it was not even certain that another force could reach them. For another six weeks the siege was to go on, in an entrenchment that was literally falling into ruins, with

mouths to feed and food running short. Havelock's arrival had brought fresh hope, and badly needed reinforcements—but no rescue for the women and children, and no assurance of victory.

The relievers brought in just one piece of good news. Eleven days before Delhi had fallen.

XIII

THE CAPTURE OF DELHI

ENCAMPED above a city which they could not take, the English "besiegers" of Delhi spent a weary and disheartening June. Their artillery was too short-ranged to make any impression on the city walls, and they had no material to build advanced batteries nor any means of guarding such batteries if they had been built. General Barnard might say, in one of his semi-apologetic letters to John Lawrence, that he thought the sepoys' spirit had been broken : there was little evidence to back him.

They made a joke of the English army. They used to watch every detail of its daily activities, and they had the range of every pathway about the Ridge. A relief of pickets, an officer on his way to inspect a battery, a line of cookboys, cauldron on head, bearing food to the masters—in would come the inevitable round shot to take off somebody's head or spoil somebody's dinner.

The sepoys had a great sense of humour, which could only be dampened by superior artillery fire : whatever Barnard might say, their walls and their spirit would have to be broken together.

And these English besiegers were always in danger of being overwhelmed themselves. Every new sepoy regiment that came in—red-uniformed with the Queen's medals, and the Company's flag—would celebrate the occasion by an attack on the Ridge, sweeping up its rocky sides, or creeping over the canal which guarded its rear.

On June 18 the Nusscrabad rebels, well drugged with *bhang*, nearly finished the whole business with a violent surprise attack. On June 23 the 60th Rifles, the Ghurkas, and the Guides went down to the Sabzi Mandi and fought for their lives all day among its houses against the mutineers from Jalandhar. That was a victory, but a few repetitions of it "would have turned our position into a graveyard on which the enemy might have quietly encamped."

But every day brought its assault—when counter-attacks would drive the sepoys back almost to their walls, and valuable lives would be lost fighting in the tangled gardens and ruined

summer-houses. It was the season of lowering skies and frequent rain storms : the camp oozed with mud : the men were damp and miserable and had no changes of uniform, the officers went about in rags : no matter how many sepoys one killed, there always seemed to be more of them. It was a sad time.

Towards the month's end things began to look up. Reinforcements were dribbling in, and Meerut was sending food and wine and quantities of bottled beer over roads that friendly native princes were successfully keeping open. Officers' messes were gay at last, and the men got drunk against the damp. Native servants were unmercifully bullied, cricket matches were organised in off hours "when the rain and Pandy are at rest," and they told one another that the only real drawbacks now were the mud and the flies. On June 24 came Lawrence's first important addition in the person of Brigadier-General Neville Chamberlain, with his stern pale face and his great Punjab reputation. They said that his presence was worth a thousand men, but they did not care very much for him personally. Lawrence's chief lieutenants were not as other men, and knew it.

Then Baird Smith was sent for from Roorkee to take over the command of the engineers

got together six hundred Pioneers, loaded sixty carts with tools and stores, and by July 2 was sixty miles from Delhi.

There an express reached him. Barnard had planned a general attack for the next morning at three o'clock, and his presence was badly needed. On horseback, on elephant, in the Rajah of Jhind's coach and four, Baird Smith "scrambled" into Barnard's encampment at the appointed hour—only to find that the attack had been called off again.

It was Barnard's last chance—a "gamester's throw," as he called it ruefully, and he was not a gamester. The next day he was dead—like Anson before him, a victim of cholera. A Crimean veteran, he felt that he did not understand Indian fighting, and was never happy in his command, though he was a good soldier and a gallant gentleman. His officers, though they mourned him sincerely after his death, nagged him part way into it with their incessant demands for action: the cold shadow of John Lawrence was over him, as it had been over Anson. Worry, self-distrust, over-work and insomnia paved the way for cholera, and his last message was to Baird Smith, asking for a good word after he was dead.

General Reed, the new commander, was old

and unhealthy. He had played little part in the siege, and now that the command came to him he was visited with extreme caution. He would not hear of assault. Meanwhile the enemy were increasing in numbers, and it was quite obvious that they had an unlimited supply of ammunition.

On July 9 the mutineers from Bareilly, who had turned that station into a slaughter-house before they left it, made a vicious attack on the rear, sent some English cavalry recruits into headlong flight, and swept right into the besiegers' camp. They were eventually dispersed : but not before a number of English soldiers, seeing no enemy to attack, had slaughtered some of their own camp-followers who were huddled together near the Christian churchyard.

On July 14 Neville Chamberlain had his arm smashed in a counter-attack, and took no further part in the fighting at Delhi, and on the same day Reed went into voluntary retirement, since he could scarcely leave his bed. With Chamberlain's advice he promoted Archdale Wilson to the command, over the heads of two or three senior officers ; who thereupon retired in high dudgeon, to air their grievances in the nerve-racked summer colony at Simla.

Wilson was undoubtedly the right man to

choose, since Chamberlain himself was incapacitated. The Meerut brigadier was a good organiser, and his mind had been trained by long years in the artillery. But the position was now so bad—the mutineers increasing, the English decreasing—that he seriously contemplated evacuating the Ridge and leaving Delhi to its own devices until a larger force and better artillery could be brought against it. Baird Smith was horrified by this suggestion, and Chamberlain refused to listen, so Wilson sadly agreed to hang on as best he could until heavier field-guns should arrive—in whatever distant future. “The enemy are very numerous,” he wrote to Colvin in Agra, “and may possibly break through our entrenchments and overwhelm us. But this force will die at its post.”

On August 7, Brigadier-General John Nicholson rode into camp.

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“If there is a desperate deed to be done in India,” Herbert Edwardes had told Lord Canning, “John Nicholson is the man to do it.” Indeed, this was the most extraordinary character that ever came to prominence and death in 1857. Only thirty-six years old, tall, bearded, with a

dead white face and terrifying grey eyes, he was already almost a legend among the Punjab natives. He had served there as a soldier and as a deputy commissioner since 1847 : they could tell you how, with just a handful of men, he would put great armies to flight and that "the tramp of his war-horse could be heard from Attock to the Khyber." The sternness of his justice and the force of his personality, his great physical strength and absolute lack of fear had an especial appeal to the Eastern mind. So great was the force of this mingled admiration and dread which he inspired that a brotherhood of *fakirs* actually made him into a God, renouncing all other creeds and devoting themselves to the worship of "Nikul-Seyn." They used to waylay him and fall at his feet with votive offerings, and when he flogged them soundly for this inconvenient piety they thought him all the more a god. His Sikh soldiers, too, would come into his tent at night and confess their sins of the past day : whereupon they were beaten, not for turning the tent into a confessional, but because they had sinned.

His character was a strange mixture. He had the virtues of a Galahad and the vices of a minor prophet : he was at once chivalrous and blood-thirsty, half gentleman and half fanatic. Like

most of the leaders in India at that time he was deeply religious, with the sort of Christianity which depends upon the Old Testament for its strength. "Let us propose a Bill," he had written to his colleague, Herbert Edwardes, "for the flaying alive, impalement, or burning of the murderers of the women and children at Delhi. The idea of simply hanging the perpetrators of such atrocities is maddening. . . . As regards torturing . . . if it be right otherwise, I do not think we should refrain from it, because it is a native custom. We are told in the Bible that stripes should be meted out according to faults, and if hanging is sufficient punishment for such wretches, it is too severe for ordinary mutineers. If I had them in my power to-day, and knew that I were to die to-morrow I would inflict the most excruciating tortures I could think of on them with a perfectly easy conscience."

John Lawrence, his friend and sponsor, often had to call him to account for being too masterful with his superiors—always to Nicholson's surprise. It was Nicholson's "Movable Column" which had kept the Punjab quiet in the first days of mutiny, and Nicholson's advice which had prevented Lawrence from abandoning Peshawar and concentrating all his force upon

Delhi. Though many of the officials with whom he came in contact affected to despise him, as an upstart and a favourite, to the English generally he was known as the "Northern Hurricane." By all accounts he seems to have deserved the name.

On his first evening in camp he upset Baird Smith, who resented being treated as if he were a nobody ; and there were other officers who felt the same way. But when Nicholson was pre-occupied he never bothered much about the other man's feelings, or considered all the niceties of rank. He shot out questions in his deep voice and scarcely waited for the answer ; perhaps he felt the answer scarcely worth waiting for. It was no secret that John Lawrence had sent him to Delhi to bring the army there out of its "lethargy."

But to the subalterns and the rank and file his presence was an inspiration. For the first time the army began to believe in itself, and there was no longer any doubt that the city would fall. On August 14 his famous "Movable Column" marched in, twenty-five hundred strong ; and, better still, a siege train of heavy ordnance was known to be moving down from Ferozepore.

The sepoys in Delhi had wind of this, so

Hodson's spies reported, and were determined to intercept it. Nicholson was equally determined to meet and destroy the intercepting force. On August 25 he set out for the village of Nujufguhr, whither the Neemuch and Bareilly brigades of mutineers were believed to have preceded him the day before.

It was difficult marching : the roads, never better than bullock tracks, sometimes disappeared altogether in swamps and floods, for the rain had been heavy. Guns sank to their axles, horses slipped, camels sprawled and fell : the men, soaked to the skin and covered with mud, slithered one step back for every two forward. But at last, as the evening drew in, they came up to a swollen stream, with the Neemuch mutineers occupying two villages and a *serai* on the further bank.

They forded the stream, breast high, under heavy fire. Once across, Nicholson made them lie down, drew himself up in his stirrups, and gave them the old advice of Colin Campbell to his Highlanders at Chilianwallah : "Hold your fire until you are within twenty or thirty yards of the enemy, then pour your volleys into them, give them a bayonet charge, and the *serai* is yours." They were hard words. Charging across the mud in the face of grape shot and

bullets was difficult enough—holding one's fire demanded every ounce of self-control. But Nicholson was the sort of man whom one obeyed.

His Europeans carried the *serai* in a bloody hand-to-hand encounter, his Sikhs cleared the two flanking villages. The Neemuch brigade was pursued, with the loss of eight hundred men and thirteen guns, and never showed its face in Delhi again. Weary and mud-stained, the victors marched back to the Ridge, refused an ovation, and hurried off to their quarters. Nicholson himself was an angry man. "Had I had a decent political officer," he wrote to John Lawrence, "to get a little information, I might have smashed the Bareilly brigade at Palum." None the less this victory marked the first turning of the tide in England's favour : nothing so definite had been accomplished in all the preceding months of mutiny. "I wish I had the power of knighting you on the spot," wrote Sir John Lawrence. Nicholson's reply was modesty itself—"I would rather earn the good opinion of my friends than any kind of honorary distinction." He certainly had the good opinion of every man upon the Ridge from this day onwards.

On September 4 the Ferozepore siege train, an unwieldy procession of elephants and heavy

guns, came lumbering in. There was nothing now to prevent a general assault upon Delhi ; but Archdale Wilson, who seemed to be falling into a permanent melancholy, was very unwilling to risk it. Nicholson, Chamberlain and Baird Smith decided to make up his mind for him, and refused to let him alone until he had given his assent. The first step was to bombard the walls.

Baird Smith should have supervised the building of the advanced batteries, but for the last fortnight he had been fighting off dysentery with opium and brandy, and could scarcely move for weakness. So Captain Alex Taylor, fresh from pushing the Grand Trunk Road across the Punjab to Peshawar, took over the work. For two nights men sweated between the Ridge and the city, cutting down trees and clearing away the tangled undergrowth : on the morning of September 8 the first battery was thundering midway between the Ridge and the great Mori Bastion of Delhi. On September 11 the second battery was knocking great blocks of masonry from the Kashmir Gate, and in the roar of its guns the third battery was put up in the old Mogul Custom House ; right under the sepoy's noses, for the Custom House was not more than one hundred and sixty yards from the city walls. On Sep-

tember 12 the fourth battery went up, not far behind. In every case but one the work had been put through at night, and though the sepoys must have heard the grunting of camels and the heavy tread of oxen which brought down guns and engineering stores, they had done very little about it. And now, for the first time in three months, the English were actually battering at the walls of Delhi : fifty great guns roared against that northward wall where the defenders could bring no more than thirty to answer, and that answer was not sufficient.

On September 14 the assault was ready. The walls needed more battering in places, but a daring reconnaissance by engineer officers, one of whom crept right up to the city ditch, proved that the breaches were large enough. The English could not afford to wait much longer, for although they had a great superiority of fire their bombardment had cost them three hundred and fifty casualties and every man was needed to carry the city.

Five columns were formed—the first three to ascend the breaches in the Water Bastion and blow up the Kashmir Gate, the fourth to carry the Kishanganj suburb which lay far off to the right opposite the great Kabul Gate, the fifth to stay in reserve with the cavalry brigade. The

scheme was for the first three columns to carry the Kashmir Gate, while the fourth column covered their attack from the Kishanganj ; once in, the three columns would split up—Number Three heading straight in for the palace, while Numbers One and Two fought their way westward to the Kabul Gate and threw it open for Number Four to get in.

In broad daylight Nicholson brought his first column out of the cover of the Kadsia Bagh garden, and took them cheering up the breach in the Kashmir Curtain : to his left Brigadier Jones's second column stormed up the rubble of the Water Bastion. The two arrived at the top almost simultaneously, the sepoys fled with a wail, and down came their attackers into the tragic Main Guard of the Kashmir Gate. But the gate was still held by sepoys, and held strongly. . . .

Then the most gallant feat of the day was performed. The third column was still held in waiting in the Kadsia Bagh. Lieutenants Home and Salkeld, with eight English and Indian sappers, ran towards the Kashmir Gate, carrying powder and sand-bags. With them went Bugler Hawthorne to sound the advance. They came across the two hundred yards of intervening ground in two detachments—the first to lay the explosive,

and drop into the ditch, the second to fix the detonator and light the fuse.

Lieutenant Home succeeded in laying his bags unmolested, but had only just finished when some defender at last caught sight of his party and a heavy fire broke out. Sergeant Carmichael was killed, Havildar Mahdeo severely wounded : the others rolled safely into the dust and shelter of the ditch. Then the firing party took their place. Lieutenant Salkeld was preparing to light the fuse when a bullet crashed through his arm and he fell backward into the ditch. As he fell he threw the fuse up, and Corporal Burgess caught it. Burgess was killed instantly, for by now every sepoy on the gate was firing down ; but Sergeant Smith took the fuse from him, lit it, and jumped into the ditch. The charge exploded with a roar, the great gates fell in. Bugler Hawthorne sounded the advance.

Colonel Campbell's third column, waiting in the Kadsia Bagh, could see nothing but a red dust. Again and again came the notes of Hawthorne's bugle, rising above it clear and insistent : again and again Campbell tried to get his men to go forward. But until the air had cleared a little, and the breached Kashmir Gate loomed vaguely before them, they would not move : then at last

they went sweeping through. Down below in the ditch the remnants of that gallant ten groped for one another through a choking darkness : up in the Main Guard there was a wild, hysterical cheering as the three columns came together, and shouted to one another that they were inside Delhi at last.

There was no time to lose. Jones got safely across to the Kabul Gate with the first and second columns, cleared the place of sepoys, but found no fourth column waiting to be admitted. The Kishanganj had proved to be well fortified, and the fourth column had been broken trying to capture it. Only when the cavalry brigade moved in under heavy fire, and stood in line, as though on parade, not able to move but keeping the Kishanganj sepoys in check—only then was a very disastrous situation saved. In one sense, because patient endurance is more courageous than almost anything else in the world, what that cavalry brigade did outside the walls of Delhi has no parallel in the story of the siege.

Inside the Kabul Gate Jones saw that it was little use his waiting for the fourth column to arrive. But without it his progress was stopped. The sepoys had rallied in great numbers, and his men were dropping where they stood. At that

moment Nicholson appeared, took in the situation with one look, and ordered the advance. There was only one route—a narrow lane between the rampart wall and a row of flat-topped houses, filled with riflemen. Again and again the Bengal Fusiliers went up it, only to be driven back ; they seemed to bend and crumple against a fiery wall of rifle bullets and grape shot. The place was impassable, but Nicholson, who had little knowledge of street fighting, sprang up in a tremendous rage, and called on the Fusiliers to follow him. He had only gone a few paces when a bullet pierced his chest, and he was carried away to die. Soberly the Fusiliers consolidated their position : they made no further attempt to advance.

Campbell had taken his third column easily into the centre of Delhi. But he found the great Jama Masjid mosque blocking his path and solidly barricaded. He waited a little, and finding himself without support began to retire in good order.

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Archdale Wilson had come in by the Kashmir Gate and was now established in the church. " Such a number of woebegone faces I had never seen before in my life," wrote Lieutenant Roberts

(in later years Field-Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar) who was there with him. Indeed there was nothing but bad news. The fourth column had been held up outside the city ; Nicholson was reported dying ; Jones had been checked between the Kabul and Lahore Gates ; Campbell's third column was somewhere in the city's labyrinth.

Then the men began to drift back : Campbell's column in good order, and some of Jones's men in no order at all. The fifth reserve column came in at midday. There was a great confusion around the church and very little discipline. The men were disheartened, for street fighting was something they really hated ; the officers disgusted by what they thought was cowardice in the face of the enemy ; the commander was gloomy and dispiriting. Then somebody discovered the liquor.

Merchants of expensive imported wines and spirits had long made the district about the Kashmir Gate their headquarters. With their infallible instinct for hidden drink, the English soldiers had soon unearthed an enormous quantity, and began to make up for all the morning's disappointments. Wilson suddenly found that his army was completely out of hand.

From September 14-16 the orgy went on

unchecked, and the northern lanes of Delhi were filled with every kind of abomination ; the English soldiers were making up for three months of impatience and discouragement, for three months of wounds, sickness and sepoy attacks, of wild rumours and constant fear. The Sikhs, whose fathers and grandfathers had dreamed of the sack of Delhi, plundered and murdered beside them.

And while his army rioted the whole of Wilson's rear was open. The Kishanganj suburb was still in sepoy hands, and sepoys held the Lahore Gate and many another stronghold within the city. If these had had any heart in them they could have made a clean sweep of the Ridge, occupied as it was by a scanty body of troops, many of them invalids or convalescents. Wilson took his long sad face into a general council, and suggested immediate evacuation.

There was a furious protest : neither Baird Smith nor Chamberlain would listen. The proposal was taken to Nicholson, where he lay in hospital on the Ridge, the chill of death already on him. He had never cared for Wilson, and now he had only one answer : "Thank God I have still enough strength to shoot that man."

So Wilson was overruled once more, and set

about preparing for a more systematic advance. On September 16 all the remaining liquor was poured out into the Delhi gutters ; on the same day it appeared that the enemy, blind to their opportunities, had evacuated the Kishanganj ; and some repentant drunkards captured the Magazine, much of it untouched by its old explosion. Wilson refused to be encouraged. "We took possession of the Magazine," he wrote, "this morning, with the loss of only three wounded. This advances us a little, but it is dreadfully slow work." By the evening of September 17, however, the sepoys had largely evacuated the city ; though the Lahore Gate held out, and the advance towards the Palace was still checked by enemy riflemen.

So far as the Lahore Gate and its great bastion were concerned, the sad fact was that the English soldiers refused to attack them. They could not see the enemy, or tell where their shots came from, and, as one of their officers wrote, "they get into a panic and will not advance." There was nothing for it but to break a covered way through the enemy houses—in which laborious manner the Lahore Bastion was captured on September 19.

On September 20 the Palace fell. This was

to be the great dramatic moment, the piercing of the foul heart of mutiny. "If I get into the Palace," Hodson had boasted weeks before, "the whole House of Timour will not be worth five minutes' purchase." But there was scarcely any resistance : a few sepoys died with gallant resignation in the gateway : a few men fell : and, like the poet in Rupert Brooke's weak and amiable sonnet, the English troops burst into their heaven with a cry. It was empty. The House of Timour had fled.

It had left a sensational heap of miscellaneous loot behind, piled up in one courtyard : otherwise in all that labyrinth of corridors, mud huts and dirty palaces there was nothing to be found. In the evening Wilson and his officers dined in the marble splendour of the Dewan-i-Khas : and on the next day a salute was fired, announcing the capture of the city.

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So Delhi's hour of sorrow had come. "The very sight of a dark man stimulated our national enthusiasm almost to frenzy" : innocent citizens, who had suffered from sepoy extortion during the siege, were bayoneted, sabred and clubbed to death, clasping their hands for mercy. It was

known that many of them had wished the English well, but there was no time to think of that. Battered walls and wrenched up floors testified that the Sikhs had been thorough in their search for plunder ; the English, less discriminating by half, took what they had left.

By September 23 it was reported that the Provost-Marshal had strung up between four and five hundred wretches "and was now thinking of resigning his office." A big four-square gallows had been erected, in a prominent place in the city, and soldiers used to bribe the executioners to keep their victims a long time hanging, for they liked to see the criminals dance "a Pandy's hornpipe" as they called their dying struggles. Even the best officers made little attempt to prevent these excesses : the worst would join in, to the extent of sitting by the gallows, puffing on their cigars and laughing. They were glad to report, as in the case of the Nawab of Jhujjur, that someone "had been a long time dying."

This clearing up of the city, of course, was not altogether wanton. Delhi had a bad reputation, and deserved it : and its criminal population had played a vile part in the massacre and the siege which followed. But justice is one thing and the irresponsible vengeance of a drunken soldiery

quite another : it was the latter which found such favour in London, Bombay and Madras, where a respectable Victorian middle class clamoured for blood and more blood. "In some houses," said a triumphant letter to the *Bombay Telegram*, "forty or fifty persons were hiding. These were not mutineers, but residents of the city, who trusted to our well-known mild rule for pardon. I am glad to say that they were disappointed." So, to the applause of undersized clerks and clergymen's widows, the massacre of May 11 was repaid with massacre ; and Bengal sepoy and British soldier were equally disgraced.

Disappointed of revenge in the Palace, Hodson of Hodson's Horse was still dreaming romantic dreams. He saw himself as an heroic conqueror, dragging in the King of Delhi at his saddle-bow. Discredited in every particular except that of personal gallantry, he thought he might win his way back to favour with one tremendous coup. He decided that he and he alone should capture the old man.

It was soon discovered that a traitorous, or, as he would have been called, a "loyal" member of the royal family had kept the King from escaping with the remnants of his army, and that he was hidden in the magnificent tomb of Humayun the Emperor, six miles out of Delhi.

Hodson got leave from Wilson and galloped out with fifty of his native troopers : in the Tomb's beautiful gateway, under the shadow of its milk-white domes, a British major received the sword of the last Mogul emperor. The symbolism of that was all wrong, but it was a symbolism with a very strong appeal, and it should have satisfied Hodson. Unfortunately it did not.

In an evil hour somebody told him that the King's three sons were hiding in a tomb not far from where their father had been. Hodson had just brought his royal captive into Delhi : he turned round at once and rode back. Now the King's three sons were undoubtedly guilty men. In the May massacre some fifty men, women and children had thrown themselves upon the King's mercy, and had been confined in an underground chamber in the palace. The old Mogul probably never heard of them : but these three sons—seeing a chance for some private sport—kept them on bread and water for three days, took them up into some obscure courtyard, had a single rope passed round them, and called in their swords-men. It took quite a long time to hack this human bale to pieces, and the spectacle was much enjoyed.

So Hodson was not alone in wanting revenge, and he was quite right in thinking that the capture

of these princes would be very much to his advantage. He found them surrounded with at least a thousand retainers, some of them willing to put up a resistance. The princes, however, preferred to give themselves up, in the hope of getting a pardon for their lives. Surrounded by Hodson's troopers, their little bullock cart, with its crimson curtains drawn, went jolting back into Delhi.

Not far from the city a crowd of townsfolk came pressing in upon the escort. This was Hodson's chance. It had been difficult enough to keep his hands off the King, whom he confessed he would far rather have brought in dead than alive. Now the princes were at his mercy : unarmed though they were, and none too threatening, these townspeople could be construed as a rescue party. He called his troopers to a halt, and addressed them loudly, saying that the princes were butchers of English people, and that the government had ordained their punishment.

Then he ordered his royal captives to alight, made them strip to their under-garments, seized a carbine from one of his troopers, and deliberately shot them to death. Their bodies were thrown by the wayside, where they lay until they rotted : Hodson went on triumphantly into Delhi. "The whole nation will rejoice," he said.

At first he was congratulated, but second thoughts condemned him. The slaughter had been done in cold blood—worse still, it had been prompted by ambition. No officer had the right to take the law into his own hands in this way : it was playing to the gallery with a vengeance, it was glory seeking. Jealousy, suspicion and disgust combined to make Hodson an embittered and unpopular man.

Military law was now established in Delhi, and, because stray European soldiers were being murdered, the native populace was expelled the city. The Hindus were soon re-admitted, but the Muhammadans were rigorously excluded for some time to come, as being the more blood-thirsty and fanatic. Seven hundred and fifty European soldiers and two thousand native ranks were sent out to relieve the semi-investment of Agra : the rest stayed in Delhi, to recover from their labours and quiet the surrounding districts, where bodies of mutineers were still at large.

All over India men heaved a sigh of relief. Nothing had so hurt their prestige as the long resistance of Delhi, nothing had been so costly. Over a thousand men had lost their lives there, nearly four thousand had been wounded, and worst of all John Nicholson was dead. He had

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lived just long enough to hear the signal guns proclaim the capture of the city.

But now there was only Lucknow to take, and then the roads would be open from east to west across the Presidency, and that would be the beginning of the end.

XIV

THE SECOND RELIEF OF LUCKNOW

GENERAL SIR COLIN CAMPBELL was living in retirement in England when they summoned him to take Anson's place as Commander-in-Chief. That was on July 11, and he offered to start the same afternoon.

He was sixty-five years old, and had worn the sword for forty-nine years, holding his commission under three kings and queens. "The war-bred Sir Colin" came of extremely humble Highland origin, and had literally fought his way to the position he then occupied : the Peninsula, the American War of 1814, the Sikh Wars, the Afridi border campaign, the Crimean War—he had gone through them all, and they had been his school and college and text-book. If he seemed a thought too old for so arduous a position as the one offered him in 1857, it was certain that no other officer in the whole British army was so fitted for it.

He was not, perhaps, a very great general—not as Wellington and Napier had been accounted great; but he was a tough, dour fighter, with that combination of fire and caution which is the secret of the Scots' genius for battle. Such a man was needed in India—a man with a long and varied experience who could be counted on not to lose his head.

He landed in Calcutta on August 13, a fortnight after Outram, who was already pushing slowly up country. His first job was to complete the arrangements which Sir Patrick Grant had already set in hand for a new army headquarters; to perfect the new supply system which was to maintain those forces now on their way; and above all to keep the roads open between Calcutta and the interior. The hasty passage of Neill and Havelock, the slower progress of Outram, had not dealt too thoroughly with rebellion in Bihar and on the Ganges. The roads were still infested with mutineers and local wild tribes. Campbell had plenty to look after.

His cautious nature would have preferred to wait until he had a large and really well organised army under his command; but circumstances combined to force him to move before he was ready. Havelock and Outram had disappeared into the defences of Lucknow, and there was not

another considerable force between Delhi and Calcutta. Worse still, look where he would he could find no other efficient commander in India. With Havelock and Outram locked up, and the tempestuous Nicholson dead, there was nobody left but himself. One side of him was eager to do battle, the other reluctant to go until the army's house had been set in order : it was in a very mixed state of mind that he left Calcutta for Cawnpore.

There the "Delhi Column" was already awaiting him, veterans of the siege, who had driven the sepoys out of Agra before marching onwards into Oudh. These and the newly arrived 53rd Foot and 93rd Highlanders—three thousand, four hundred men in all—made up his army. On November 11 he had them drawn up for review on the further bank of the Ganges.

It was a strange mixture, that army. Field-guns from Delhi, blackened and service worn. The 9th Lancers, very perfection of a cavalry regiment. Sikh horsemen, with their fawn-coloured dresses, long boots, turbans and sashes—each man armed with carbine and wicked *tulwar*. The wasted, battle-scarred remnant of the 8th and 75th Queen's regiments. Two regiments of Punjab infantry, tall, fierce, bearded

men and notable plunderers. And then, on the far left, a sea of plumes and tartan—the 93rd Highlanders.

They approved of Campbell as he passed them in review from right to left. He had a short, spare figure—and when you looked into his keen grey eyes you knew you were looking at a soldier. But it was not until he reached the far left of the line, and a wild cheering broke out, that they realised what the men he had once commanded still thought of him.

For these were the Scotsmen he had led against the Russians, the men who had stood behind him on Balaclava heights, the “thin red line” which has no equal in the history of the British army. Campbell stopped in front of them. He was no orator like Havelock, but he prided himself on knowing what to say : this time his speech was brief and compelling : “93rd, you are my own lads. I rely on you to do the work.” “Aye, Sir Colin,” they answered. “Ye ken us and we ken you ; we’ll bring the women and children out of Lucknow.”

Just before he started he was reinforced by fifteen hundred men, including Captain William Peel of the Royal Navy, with his famous heavy guns. Behind him in Cawnpore he left “Redan” Windham with five hundred European troops and

five hundred men of the 27th Madras Native Infantry. With Tantia Topee still in the neighbourhood, and a large body of mutineers likely to be moving up from Gwalior, Cawnpore was no easy place to stay in. But Windham, if he had no Indian experience whatsoever, was known to be a fighting general and a good man in emergencies.

With Campbell went one Kavanagh, a Lucknow civil servant, who had crept out of the Residency in disguise, and come through forty miles of dangerous country expressly to guide the new general in. Kavanagh brought reassuring news. Havelock and Outram, the latter now in command as Chief Commissioner of Oudh, had driven the sepoys out of every position from which they could inconvenience the Residency garrison ; and though there were a full sixty thousand insurgents in and around Lucknow, it was pretty certain that the English women and children there were still safe.

By November 14 Campbell was at the Alum Bagh, held for the last six weeks by a small detachment of Outram's European troops, who were thankful enough for this relief. There Sir Colin sketched out his plan of campaign. He proposed to establish his base at Dilkusha Park, a great enclosed garden two miles east of the

Residency. Thence he would move upwards by means of a series of strong posts, the strongest of them the Sekundra Bagh, or Fortunate Garden, at that moment the home of a little army of sepoys.

On November 15 Campbell struck swiftly at the rear of this position. It was a great two-storied, flat-roofed house, in the middle of a large garden, with walls twenty feet high, and a circular bastion at each corner. It could only be approached by narrow lanes, and as the head of the British column came in sight the sepoy defenders loosed a positive tempest of musketry fire. Caught in their lane, cavalry and infantry were alike helpless. But as the advance wavered, Blunt drove his horses up the lane's steep bank, the eighteen-pounders swayed and staggered after, and a fierce breaching fire was opened on the garden defences. For three-quarters of an hour they battered at the tough brick wall, Sir Colin standing by to keep back his Highlanders and Sikhs, who were eager to make a rush before the breach was ready.

Then he let them loose. The Sikhs had a few yards' start, but a Scots sergeant managed to outstrip them, jumped through the opening "like a harlequin," and as he landed on the other side was shot through the breast and fell dead. With

their buglers sounding the advance, the whole seven Highland companies came thundering after.

There may have been as many as three thousand sepoys in that garden—regular Bengal regiments, and desperate men who knew they were to expect no mercy. For two hours the fight raged, as they were driven slowly across the garden or hunted from floor to floor within the building.

The 93rd, says Forbes Mitchell, was like a Highland parish, minister and elders complete : the regiment had even brought a service of communion plate along with it. One of these godly men, who went by the name of Quaker Wallace, went charging into the Sekundra Bagh singing a verse from the Scotch metrical psalms—a line to every thrust of his bayonet :

I'll of salvation take the cup.
On God's name will I call ;
I'll pay my vows now to the Lord
Before His people all.

Aiming for a sniper, concealed in a tree and doing terrific damage, Wallace shot—and a woman tumbled down at his feet. The blood-smeared Highlander burst into tears. “If I had known it was a woman,” he sobbed, “I

had rather died a thousand deaths than killed her."

When the terrific slaughter was over eighteen hundred sepoys lay dead in the enclosure—all of them in Her Majesty's scarlet coats, and wearing Her Majesty's silver medals. . . .

Straight ahead of them lay the Shah Nujif, a great Mosque, girdled with loop-holed walls and screened with trees. This time Peel's naval brigade came into action, running its guns to within twenty yards of the place, and toiling for three hours under a double cross-fire and at point-blank range. But the walls were so stubborn that Peel could make nothing of them, and Campbell was just about to call on the 93rd to carry the position when a Sergeant Paton discovered a breach in the north-east rampart next the River Gamti.

The sepoys here were not so determined as their comrades of the Sekundra Bagh. When they saw the breach had been found they went out of the Mosque's back gate like so many sheep, and the British walked in and took over without striking a blow.

Campbell's spies had now established connection with Outram, who was ready to do all he could to help. On the next day position after position was stormed, until the last of all—the

Brigade Mess House—was carried successfully. From its roof the Union Jack was to be raised as a signal to the Residency : twice the sepoys shot it down, in a desperate concentration of fire, while a little bugler defied them with a call known as “ Cock of the North.”

But Outram had seen it, and came pushing cautiously out, occupying building after building under a hot fire, until he met with Campbell at the Mess House slope. A few minutes later they were joined by Havelock, who had run the whole three-quarters of a mile down to greet his Commander-in-Chief. A few brief words, and the three generals went back together to the arched gateway of the Baillie Guard.

And from the Residency walls the head of the column was seen advancing, the plumes of its horsemen waving in the twilight and the smoke.

§

Campbell had lost over five hundred officers and men in this relief, and he had not ended the siege : if he stayed on at the Residency, or in any other part of Lucknow, a week or two would find him as securely locked up as ever Havelock and Outram had been. Moreover, he had a strange

presentiment that Cawnpore was in danger, though no news had come through from "Redan" Windham. So he made up his mind to evacuate the city at once, leaving Outram behind in the Alum Bagh, to keep the ways open for a future army that should once and for all drive the rebels out.

This decision was very badly received, especially by the remnant of the garrison. Their pride rebelled against deserting a post where, alone in Oudh, the flag had flown throughout the crisis of the mutiny. Havelock's men, and now Campbell's men, had helped to swell this very natural feeling, for each relief in turn had marvelled that such a heap of ruins, every standing inch of it scarred with bullets and holed by round shot, could have been held at all. Inglis went over to Campbell's headquarters at the Sekundra Bagh to protest in person. But Campbell was not to be moved.

On November 19 the ladies and children were taken down to the Sekundra Bagh. Three places on the way were exposed to hostile fire, and on each occasion the ladies left their carriages, caught up their children, and made a run for it. Nobody was hit, nor did the sepoys actually realise that an evacuation was proceeding. In the evening Outram brought out the sick and wounded,

perhaps a thousand in number, and did it so skilfully that on the morning of November 20 the sepoys cannonaded the Residency for four hours without realising that the place was half empty. A line of pickets had been established between the Sekundra Bagh and Dilkusha Park, and it was to the latter place that sick, wounded, ladies and children were moved on the 20th. Whenever the Residency veterans visited them here they were feasted on English bread and butter—a treat they had been denied for five months and seemed to crave above everything else.

Campbell brought Havelock news of a long-deserved reward : the Queen had bestowed upon him the honour of Knight Commander of the Bath. Not a man in the army begrudged it to him—it was known that few officers had received so little recognition as he. But Havelock lived only a few days to enjoy it. For the last few weeks he had been a sick man, and when he had run down to meet Campbell at the Mess House he had put too great a strain on himself. India's reward for mutiny generals seems to have been the dysentery : on November 21 Havelock was seized with such a violent attack that he had to be moved at once to a tent in the Dilkusha Park.

By November 23 he was very bad indeed, and it was general knowledge that he was going to die. The pietists and romantics—which is to say a good seventy-five per cent of the Lucknow army—were cheered by the thought that he was dying a Christian death in the very hour of his glory. Nothing could be more appropriate. For Havelock was not beloved like Henry Lawrence nor revered like John Nicholson : he was just an example of all the unshining virtues ; a man to preach about, not a friend to mourn.

Yet nobody had been more badly cheated. He was on the threshold of all he wanted. He was the renowned soldier at last ; his name was on everybody's lips. There would be no more need for him to wear his medals and his sword at dinner in case they should forget that he was a general. The rest of his life would be a vindication and a triumph. And that was denied him.

So the little old grey man died as he had lived, refusing to see anyone but his son, the doctor and the clergyman. He wanted no society in the common soldier's tent where he lay—the gentle consolations of ladies, the congratulations of officers and civil servants, all the graces and pretences which had defeated him through his life. His son, one arm bound up in a sling, could

do everything for him : and his son alone stood by the bedside when that brave and disappointed life went out in the early forenoon of November 24.

Henry Lawrence and Henry Havelock had been lieutenants together in the artillery barracks at Dum-Dum. That was forty years before, and since then their ways had been widely separated, until the same city killed them both. They lie buried, one in the Residency, the other in the Alum Bagh.

§

At midnight of November 22 Outram withdrew the fighting men from the Residency. First that post which was nearest the enemy was marched out ; then each post in turn fell in behind ; and the whole fourteen passed in dead silence through the Baillie Guard gate. So the Residency was left to the keeping of its dead, and to the scattered and unsuspecting besiegers.

Outram and Inglis stood at the Baillie Guard to see that no man betrayed his presence as he slipped away. When all fourteen posts had passed through Outram waved his hand to Inglis to precede him : but the Colonel stood firm and

claimed that he should be the last to leave that ground which he and his men had defended. Outram smiled, thrust out his hand, and said, "Let us go out together." So, shaking hands and taking off their hats to the Baillie Guard, these two went side by side through the battered gate, down the slope beyond it, and into the sullen quiet of Lucknow.

§

On November 24 Campbell took the ladies, the sick, and the children out to the Alum Bagh, and encamped about half a mile beyond it ; they had brought Havelock's body with them, and buried it beneath a group of three trees. For the next two days they waited there, while Outram made his dispositions, for he was to hold the Alum Bagh with four thousand men until Campbell could return and put an end to rebellion in Lucknow.

On November 27 Campbell set out on a seventeen miles' march to Banni. He was anxious enough to find out what had been happening to Windham, for as yet no news of any kind had come through. He had not, of course, communicated his fears to the ladies, who thought that

their troubles were at an end ; and it was a sad shock to them, as they lay in Banni that night, to hear the old and fearful sound of heavy guns coming up from the direction of Cawnpore.

Early next morning they struck their tents, marched all day, and by nightfall were encamped within two miles of the Ganges. Sir Colin had already left them. During the march his first dispatches from Windham told him that Cawnpore was in great peril, and at Mangalwahr he had halted his troops, fired three salvoes to announce his approach, and spurred forward with his staff. His great fear was that the bridge of boats might be destroyed ; but though it proved to be still intact, vast sheets of flame from burning buildings showed him that the rebels must have defeated Windham and retaken Cawnpore.

What had actually happened was this : Windham's original force had been increased by some Madras native infantrymen and various drafts from European regiments, which gave him a very mixed body of about seventeen hundred men : against this somewhat dubious force was the army of Tantia Topee, which had been hanging about the neighbourhood of Cawnpore like a vague cloud, constantly changing size, shape and position.

Not long after Campbell's departure for Lucknow Tantia Topee began to come closer. It was known that he had been lately joined by the Gwalior contingent—part of the revolted army of that great and friendly prince, Sindhia—and that he had as much as twenty-five thousand men under him.

Windham's orders were definite—he was not to leave the city. But with this new threat to consider he felt that these orders had lost a good deal of their meaning. He had sent dispatches to Campbell, which had somehow gone astray ; and at last he felt that he could wait no longer. So he marched his troops out to a position about six miles along the Kalpi Road ; and there, on November 26, Tantia Topee's whole army swooped down upon him.

Windham's only hope had been to face things out in the open, but, outnumbered as he was by at least twenty to one, he could do nothing but fight his way back yard by yard, and pray that his natives and his green European troops would not break and run. November 27 found him with his back to the bridge-head ; and he was fighting a last desperate fight there, when Campbell reached him on the next day.

Peel's guns had been ordered to follow the Commander-in-Chief from Mangelwhar with all

the speed that could be goaded out of oxen and elephants. They arrived just in time. At the sight of them, swinging into action across the river, Tantia Topee's army retired, and the bridge-head was saved. Its loss would have meant the loss of Cawnpore and even a dangerous and heart-breaking retirement upon Lucknow.

It was not until after dark on Sunday, November 29, that Campbell thought it safe to bring his party across the river. Ironically enough the ladies were made to encamp not far from Wheeler's old entrenchment, that place of terrible memories. On December 1, believing that the sepoys had discovered their whereabouts, Campbell made them move away in the very early morning: and but an hour later their enemies started firing shrapnel into the place they had just left, and kept it up until evening. In that one sees the hand of Tantia Topee. Five months before and scarcely a mile away he had supervised the slaughter of other Englishwomen down in Massacre Ghat.

§

On December 3 Campbell's ladies and children left Cawnpore. They marched all night and hid

all day : by December 7 they reached the rail-head and were ordered to entrain at once. And so to Allahabad station, and safety, and enthusiastic, weeping crowds. And Christmas in Calcutta for the widows and the sick women. And home.

§

The rebels now occupied about half the city, with the Ganges canal between them and the British. Campbell thoroughly reconnoitred their position and knew that, with any luck, he had them in his power. Their right stretched out far into the plain, their left lay on the Ganges itself, and they had built a temporary bridge over the canal. This bridge was at once their strength and their weakness : if they could hold it, it could be a death-trap to the British ; if they lost it, they lost the battle then and there.

Campbell decided that Hope Grant and Inglis, with the Highlanders, Sikhs and 53rd Foot, should carry the bridge and turn the sepoys' right. Colonel Mansfield, his chief of staff and a methodical fighter, could push their left steadily in front of him—it was chiefly composed of Sindhia's revolted troops, who were more gaudy than pugnacious. Campbell himself would make a feint at their centre.

On the morning of December 6 he opened up with a terrific bombardment. Hope Grant and Inglis brought their men safely to the bridge, but once there they could not move. They had not expected such a bitter, withering fire, and for one terrible moment Highlanders and Sikhs alike made that first slow backward movement which is the preface to rout. But once again Peel arrived in the nick of time, appearing out of nowhere with a twenty-four-pounder on the run. He planted it at the bridge head, opened fire and silenced the enemy artillery just long enough for Sikhs and Highlanders to get their second breath. Then they came past him at a run, swept over the bridge, and drove the sepoys helter skelter before them far up the Kalpi road.

Meanwhile the sepoy left was being steadily pushed down the Bithoor road. But Colonel Mansfield was most unfortunately short-sighted, and at a critical moment he let Sindbia's rebels walk away under his very nose, guns and all, to the amazement and fury of his men. The battle had been won, of course ; but a whole left wing, that should have been cut to bits, was allowed to walk quietly away into Bithoor.

Too quietly, as it happened. Hope Grant took his cavalry after them, found them still on the river's bank contemplating an escape into Oudh,

broke into their leisure with his sabres, took all their guns, and did his best to level Bithoor with the ground.

And there the real story of the Bengal Mutiny—the story of little armies and lonely men—comes to an end.

§

Delhi, Agra and Cawnpore were now safely in British hands, and with the capture of Lucknow the mutineers would have no rallying-place left them. As the year closed it was to Lucknow that they drifted—all those disaffected spirits who still hoped, or still believed, that the Bengal native army could become paramount in India.

And just outside Lucknow Outram held the Alum Bagh with his four thousand men. It was like a sword at the great city's throat, that position, and the task of holding it was one which just suited Outram who, if he was not a brilliant general, had a cool head and a great deal of courage. For three months he and his men held out—four thousand against one hundred and twenty thousand ; and if the odds seem excessive, it must be remembered that the English had one thing which their enemies wanted—conviction. On the surface these enemies seemed just as

excited and just as fanatic, but underneath there was an odd lack of confidence and purpose. Six great attacks they launched, with as many as thirty thousand men to each : but beneath the thunder of those attacks you can hear the small and insistent crumbling away of a great mutiny.

With Outram as a screen for his activities, Campbell was systematically "cleaning up." First the district around Cawnpore was purged of rebellion, then Rohilkhand, then the North-west Provinces from Agra to the foot of the Himalayas. By telegraph and messenger he learned that the roads clean across to Peshawar were now open—still dangerous, of course, but not impassable, and growing clearer every day. And reinforcements were coming in to him. By March, 1858, he was ready to go back to Lucknow.

One look at those reinforcements is sufficient to tell what a great change had come about. There were thirty-one thousand of them, with one hundred and sixty-four guns—almost a perfect fighting machine, well equipped and well officered. What a difference from Barnard's little army and Havelock's little army, which had stumbled and died through the burning summer of 1857 ! Moreover, nearly a third of this new army was made up of Ghurkas, sent

down by the King of Nepal under his prime minister, Jung Bahadur : and the spectacle of the greatest fighting prince in India arrayed beneath the British flag was of enormous significance.

There were Delhi veterans and Lucknow veterans ; fresh troops who had landed in Calcutta from Persia, China and England ; new reinforcements from the Punjab. When they set out for Lucknow there was no question in anybody's mind about what the outcome would be : when they came within sight of the city *The Times* war correspondent described it with pleasant anticipation—"A vision of palaces and minarets, domes azure and golden, cupolas, colonnades . . . pillar and column and terraced roofs all rising up amid a calm still ocean of brightest verdure. . . . Here is a city more vast than Paris, as it seems, and more brilliant, lying before us." Remembering the spoils of Delhi, the Sikhs licked their lips and thought kindly of their families at home.

From March 2 to March 21 the storming of that city continued. While heavy guns took the enemy's position in reverse, the British right and left closed in like the two blades of a scissors, cutting through the sepoy defences like a paper screen. At last there was nothing

left before the two blades ground together but a great block of buildings called the Beegum's Palace, and the fight there was stubborn and bloody. After hours of bombardment the heavy guns could open no more than a tiny breach beside the main gate. Against this went the famous 93rd Highlanders, or what was left of them, with the 4th Punjab Rifles in support—a fierce charge, stopped at the last minute by a ditch that was fourteen feet deep. Down jumped the Highlanders without a pause, only to find there was no way up the other side, until Lieutenant Wood hoisted his six feet of brawn on to the shoulders of a tall private and scrambled into the breach. The spectacle of a Highland bonnet and claymore seemed to be too much for the defenders ; they broke and fled, and Wood began calmly to pull his men up out of the ditch by their rifle muzzles—each rifle being loaded and at full cock.

Scotsmen and Punjaubis broke into that tangle of courtyards like so many furies : barricade after barricade went down, walls were scaled, loop-holed doorways broken in with the musket butt. At last the rebels were crowded into an inner court and died for two hours at the bayonet's point, the Highland pipe major playing madly all the while.

Elsewhere the stormers had forced their way into the Kaiserbagh, the King's great palace, and swept it from end to end. Half the wealth of India seemed to have been gathered here, and they waded through courts piled high with brocades and golden shawls and jewel-encrusted armour : it was a great looting.

Everything had gone by the book. Outram was pushing steadily up the north bank of the river, and would have cut off the sepoys' retreat if Campbell had not held him back from the Residency's iron bridge, by which narrow way vast numbers of sepoys escaped into Oudh. Campbell tried to make up for this over-caution on the next day, when he sent two cavalry brigades after the refugees, and sent them by the wrong road. This was his second blunder, for the absence of cavalry left such a gap along the Gamti's northern bank that twenty thousand sepoys were said to have gone through it, and to have created trouble in Oudh that lasted until May of the next year.

But the last great centre of revolt had fallen, and the back of the mutiny was broken. Lord Canning published a proclamation, offering mercy only to those rebels who surrendered at once ; and its stern wording, coming from a man who was known for clemency, provoked

some anger among the milder sort of Englishmen. But it was not Canning who spoke : it was the voice of a great people demanding vengeance, now that vengeance was in its power at last.

XV

THE AFTERMATH

JAMES STEPHENS once wrote about a very different kind of rebellion—"Meanwhile the Insurrection, like its historical forerunners, has been quelled in blood. It sounds rhetorical to say so, but it was not quelled in pea-soup or tisane." This simple irony says all that can be said for every unsuccessful insurrection, even though there are many kinds of blood and many ways of shedding it. The Indian Mutiny was not completely quelled until the middle of 1859, and not without some brilliant campaigning. But the real drama had been played out long before, between May and December of 1857, between a black Sunday in Meerut and a day when Hope Grant stood among the ruins of Bithoor. Many of the real actors had left the scene : all those anonymous victims of siege and massacre ; brave men like Fulton and Moore, who never led an army or lived to see a victory ; fierce men like Neill and

Hodson ; half failures like Barnard, and Anson who “died of an attack of John Lawrence” ; and Henry Lawrence and Henry Havelock and John Nicholson.

Out of that drama some few important names survived. Sir Colin Campbell became Lord Clyde. Sir James Outram received a baronetcy. Sir John Lawrence, who once came to terms with the Almighty by blowing only forty men from his guns at Lahore, lived to be Viceroy of India, and died in London, president of a missionary society. Shah Behadur, King of Delhi, was exiled to Burma ; and the Nana Sahib simply disappeared—into Afghanistan, as everyone supposed. The English, forgetting their hatred for a while, piously hoped that he would sweat some of his fat down on those inhospitable mountains.

While Campbell plodded slowly and respectfully about Oudh and Rohilkhand, earning for himself the title of Old Khabardar—Old Take-Care, Sir Hugh Rose came up from Bombay, took command of two brigades, and won a series of brilliant victories in Central India. Tantia Topee, who at least had the courage of his villainy, opposed him to the last, and when he was utterly defeated in Gwalior towards the middle of June, 1858, led the English such a

chase as they did not forget in many months. He was betrayed in the end, and they hanged him very appropriately above the Massacre Ghat in Cawnpore.

The Rani of Jhansi led her own troops into battle, and was killed leading them—she was known as “the best *man* upon the side of the enemy,” and some misguided souls have called her the Joan of Arc of India. She and her kind—ex-rulers and disinherited heirs—found the Bengal army ready for their purpose, and at one time it seemed that their purpose would be accomplished ; during the months of July and August, 1857, it was literally touch and go, for the Mutiny carried within it the seeds of a larger insurrection. But great princes like Patiala, Sindhia, Holkar and Nepal remained friendly to England ; lesser princes decided to wait and see ; and the Punjab tribes weighed John Lawrence against the Hindus, and Lawrence won.

Moreover, however closely you examine the motives of the sepoys themselves, you can find no united purpose there. They had a Grievance but no Cause.

§

The vengeance that was taken needs no detailed record. "I fear in your case your natural tenderness," ran a letter to Henry Tucker in Benares. "But consider that we have to crucify these affections as well as our lusts. The magistrate bears not the sword in vain. The Word of God gives no authority to the modern tenderness for human life that would spare even the murderer." That was the spirit—somewhat veiled and softened—of the majority of Englishmen in India: it made the ex-Beegum of Lucknow cry out: "No one has ever seen in a dream that the English forgave an offence."

In England itself Queen Victoria deprecated "the unchristian spirit" shown by her people towards India. Benjamin Disraeli was more forthright. "I have heard things said and seen things written which would make me almost suppose that the religious opinions of the people of England had undergone some sudden change, and that instead of bowing before the name of Jesus we were preparing to revive the worship of Moloch."

There is always one sufficient reason behind a popular clamour for blood—and that is lying

rumour. The massacre of Cawnpore, horrible as it was, came to England in ten times more horrible shape. And at the end of almost every other story was the statement that women and girls had been "dishonoured" publicly in the bazaars. Subsequent official investigations proved that not one of these stories was true, for the Indian has no desire to violate white women, especially not in public, though it might please him to kill them. But a Victorian middle class, which had for the most part never even crossed the English Channel, could hardly be blamed for believing whatever it heard about India.

§

The English are a people who make capital out of their worst mistakes: and the Mutiny had very curious results, at least as far as the sepoys were concerned. Instead of becoming lords, as they had vaguely hoped, they found that they had exchanged an old and lazy dispensation for the most business-like rule that India has ever suffered. The East India Company gave way to an Empire.

The English on their side—though they did not tell themselves that you must always

conquering somebody else—learned two valuable things. Never to trust themselves again to a pampered and mercenary army, and always to remember that, if the times were favourable, Hindu and Muhammadan could unite against them.

However much they may themselves have been responsible for the Mutiny, at least they showed a magnificent courage in 1857, when a handful of them held Northern India against tremendous odds. It was the courage of men and women who cherish one special belief—a belief in themselves as a chosen people—a belief which, identified with a strange, grim, Hebraic manifestation of God, had led their nation into many promised lands.

§

History never repeats itself ; each decade speaks a new idiom, and each century a new dialect ; and so this Mutiny has no direct bearing upon India to-day. But nothing that has happened ever really dies. Both sides did things in 1857 which they would afterwards have gladly seen undone, and which their successors do not care to think about. The details have

faded : the villainies are almost forgotten : the heroisms and tragedies are nothing now but a few names on a few ugly monuments. But the shame stays.



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The literature of the Indian Mutiny is extensive: but the majority of it is personal memoir—usually repetitious and sometimes inaccurate. The following books have been found the most useful :

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Cawnpore. (To this book my chapters on Cawnpore are particularly indebted.)

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